



Desert

JANUARY, 1981 • \$1.50

SPECIAL ISSUE

WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN CALIFORNIA'S COACHELLA VALLEY

The Story of the Salton Sea

Palm Springs, I Love You

Al Capone's Desert Hideaway


PLUS:

RECREATION GUIDE TO
THE COLORADO RIVER

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The Story of the First
Bike to Cross the
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He sends his orders to the world. How swiftly his word flies. He sends the snow in all its lovely whiteness, and scatters the frost upon the ground *Psalm 147:15, 16*

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Our Cover

George Service faced his 4 x 5 Super Cambo view camera west at 10 a.m. (1/50th sec., f8 with polarizer on professional Ektachrome) and shot this small grove of Washingtonia palms near an

oasis called Pushawalla Palms, about 1½-miles east of Thousand Palms Canyon. Snow-covered Mt. San Jacinto, one of Southern California's highest peaks, is in the background.

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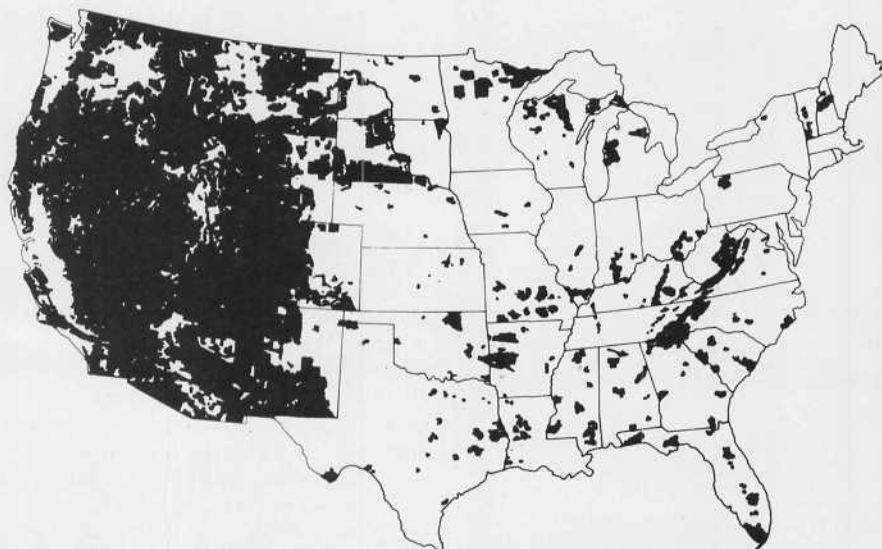
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EDITORIAL

"No Trespassing, U.S. Government Property"



THE BLACK BLOB you see above represents land owned by our federal government.

Appropriated might be a better word, for this land was the price paid, wittingly or unwittingly, by the western states for admission to the Union, each separately in its own time.

The black blob represents about 87 percent of Nevada, 66 percent of Utah, 64 percent of Idaho, 53 percent of Oregon, 48 percent of California and Wyoming, 36 percent of Colorado, 34 percent of New Mexico, 30 percent of Montana and 29 percent of Colorado. Understandably, these states plus Alaska (96 percent) and Hawaii (10 percent) have joined together in what is known as the Sagebrush Rebellion.

The rebels want their land back, and within the ranks is a sizeable group which thinks this land should be returned to the use if not the ownership of the private sector.

National forests and monuments, historic sites and within reason, military establishments and the habitat of wildlife, are not at issue. At the very most these represent considerably less than half of the land involved. No one suggests turning the nation's environmental treasures over to the lumberman or cattleman or miner for indiscriminant exploitation. What is suggested is that land presently lying

fallow behind the locked gates of the Bureau of Land Management be made available for productive use.

No one actually knows whether it would be productive or not. BLM has been administering the land in "public trust," a state of limbo wherein nature, not man, is the beneficiary, if only because the land, literally, is undisturbed. It is nature's by default. The answer to some of man's problems may lie beneath its soil but who's to know? Man is not allowed in to find out.

Man suffers his elected representatives in the U.S. Congress to favor the welfare of the Yuma clapper rail and the Mohave ground squirrel over his own. He is denied access to millions of acres of his own patrimony on one pretext or another and then asked to support those who keep him out.

Much as I love the Yuma clapper rail, the Mohave ground squirrel and even the Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard (Desert, November 1980), I shall not happily subsidize these creatures on estates a million-fold larger than my own.

It's high time our federal government got out of the land business, and the Sagebrush Rebellion is a step in that direction. Support it, encourage it, open your mind to its true message which is that you, and you, are of more purpose on earth than any animal.

Don Mac Donald

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LETTERS

QUESTIONS FOR PEGLEG

We need more information concerning your reference to the "Peralto Operation" in the article, "Pegleg Smith's Lost Gold," *Desert*, June 1980. Then we need to know what issue you are referring to when you say, "... then I'd match that information against the map from the early *Desert* Magazine referred to by Mr. Pegleg in his first letter."

*Bud Buckner
Salton City, Calif.*

During the 1950s while living in Los Angeles and when the smog became too unbearable, I spent many weekends in the fall and winter camping in the Anza-Borrego. Having read about Pegleg Smith in your magazine and having thrown a rock on his monument, we searched the arroyos and backwashes for signs of his gold but only found some interesting sand concretions and desert mica for our efforts. They were days I will always treasure, camping out in a sleeping bag with Mother Nature's star blanket overhead, and I hope someday to visit the area again. Meanwhile, your magazine will be my contact with the desert I grew to know and love, but I have a question: Did "The Man Who Found Pegleg's Black Gold" really find it?

*Iver P. Valkama
Virginia, Minn.*

"Peralta Operation" refers to the suggestion by Robert Buck, a writer and explorer from northern California, that the branch of the extensive Mexican Peralta family which migrated to, and obtained land grants in, what is now the area of San Francisco and San Jose had found gold in the "Mother Lode" well before the 49'ers. This gold, Buck speculated, was shipped by mule train to the family headquarters in Sonora, Mexico, following pretty much the historical route of the Anza Trail. One or more mule trains were attacked by Indians or wiped out by a flash flood and that's how what is known as the "Pegleg Gold" came to be found in the desert in what is now the general vicinity of Anza-Borrego State Park. The original map you asked about was printed in the November, 1946 issue of *Desert* Magazine on page 10. Essentially this same map was reproduced in our June 1980 issue.

As to Mr. Valkama's question, we have eight of the nuggets sent by The Man Who Found Pegleg's Black Gold on display at our offices in Palm Desert and they may

Continued on page 8.

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Continued from page 6.

be seen and touched. But what does it matter? As Mr. Valkama says, "They were the days I will always treasure . . ."

MEMORIES OF THE BRIDGE

Your article "Reno's Bridge of Sighs Pays Off" (*Desert*, October 1980) brought back memories for us as many years back, we stood on that same bridge and watched a couple of fellows from the Air Force base that was there at the time jump in with all their clothes on just to pick up the rings. It was just as the men in your article are doing so to us, that is nothing new.

Pauline Showalter
Los Gatos, Calif.

Fortunately, wet suits are less wet than Air Force uniforms and that is new.

DON'T FEEL REJECTED

Today I received the manuscript I had submitted to you with a handwritten note explaining why my article was being rejected. I want to thank you for your comments. This article has been sent to ten different magazines and you were the first to explain what was wrong with it. Most rejections are form letters.

Pat Hjalmarson
Tucson, Ariz.

The editors of *Desert Magazine* encourage new writers to send us their work. We'll give each submission our personal attention and where appropriate, we'll return with the rejection a personal note explaining why. We recommend, though, that you first send an S.A.S.E. for a free copy of our guidelines for writers. A sample copy of the Magazine is \$1.50 or better yet, study all the back issues you can at your local library.

THE NATURE OF ASH



As an ex-editor I must compliment you on the fine way you have improved my pet magazine, especially its pictorial quality. One of your predecessors was so

dumb he once published an article (on greasewood) by me!

I was pleased by Nick Provenza's article on St. Helens' ash (*Desert*, September 1980), but his statement that the ash was mostly silica and glass material is not quite true. I am enclosing a 50:1 macrograph of a Yakima ash sample. Note the several orthorhombic-type crystals. The black stuff is obsidian-like. The goo over all particles is the "dirt" that washed off when wet and made such a mess.

Frank P. McWhorter
Carmel, Calif.

SWEAT IT WITH THE REST OF US

No, I don't want to take advantage of your "early renewal" offer on my subscription. I feel you should sweat it out on the desert along with the rest of us. San Diego is very much a desert but it's definitely not the same.

Art Wisner
Julian, Calif.

Desert Magazine is edited in Palm Desert, California, just a few miles northwest of the Salton Sink which on any given summer day, is usually the hottest area in the nation. Our subscription fulfillment service, an independent specialist firm, is located separately from us in San Diego, partially because computers must be

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operated in a carefully controlled environment. Air-conditioning them on 120 degree days is too expensive and that is why our subscription mailings bear a San Diego return address. We are sweating it out with you!

LIZARD VS. MAN

I agree, it's true that nature's rule is survival of the fittest (Editorial, November 1980). However, I feel this rule was meant to apply to nature existing within the realm of nature, not nature existing, surviving or not surviving, within the unnatural confines imposed by *Homo sapiens* who are, strangely enough, an integral part of nature.

To me the bottom line of our problem throughout the world is too many *Homo sapiens*. We're going to proliferate ourselves, and the planet, right out of existence because the natural aspects of this earth are being disturbed by man's wastefulness, misuse of resources, carelessness and lack of concern for the planet we all must share. If I had children (and I don't by choice), I'd rather take them to see a lizard than a shopping center.

C. Kris Daniels
Idyllwild, Calif.

I have lived in the desert for over fifty years. I am very familiar with desert

lizards. I have known many as friends. They like music and would come out and up to us to listen to music from a hand-held radio. They also like to be talked to.

Cats are everywhere and they like to eat lizards. Lizards do not agree with them and they (cats) get sick and lose weight. But a lizard crawling over the desert sand is a tantalizing sight to a cat and he will catch the lizard and eat him.

For the last thirteen years we have lived in a small hot spring trailer park at the base of the Chocolate Mountains south of Indio. There used to be lizards here but the cats ate them all.

You can spend millions of dollars on a reserve for fringe-toed lizards and neighboring cats will eat them up. It is a very foolish investment.

Newell Charde
Niland, Calif.

MORE LAVA CAVES

I thoroughly enjoyed your well-written article "Caves of Lava," (*Desert*, November 1980) by Jim Yuskavitch. Trouble is, had I read the article six months ago I would have assumed that these lava tubes were unique to Oregon. However, this summer we visited Lava Beds National Monument in California where there are several caves open to the public. The Visitor's Center will loan you a battery-operated lantern for your

exploring. Since then I've learned that there are some more caves of this type near Independence, California.

Hugh J. Ulrey
Sierra Vista, Ariz.

VIKING SHIP SEEN BY OTHERS

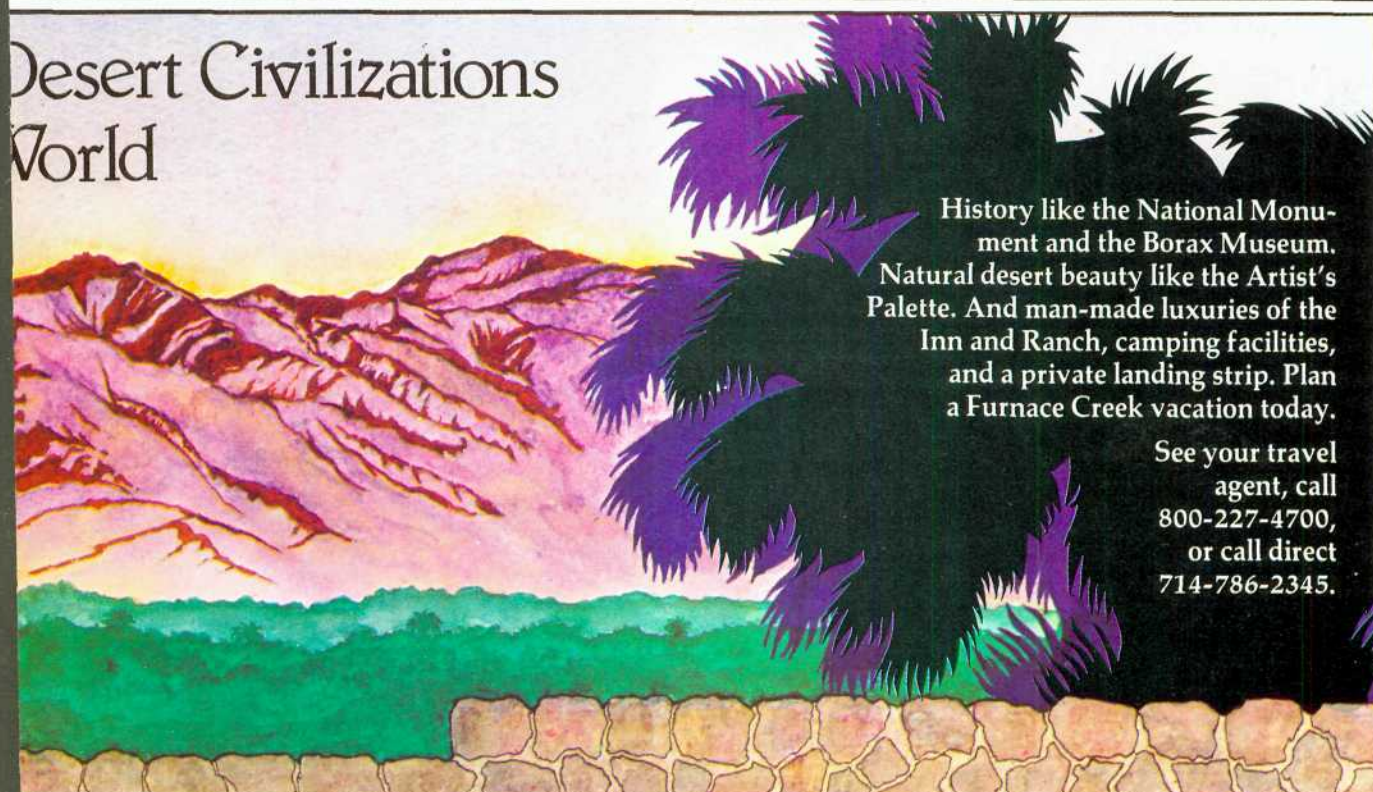
In the winter of 1931 I took "Burnt Corral" Smith, an old-time burro man, into this area to look for caves which contained Pancho Villa guns. In 1930 Mr. Smith had found a small cave-full (24 Model 95 Winchester 30/40s) which he sold "as new." A bad sand storm came up the second day and we pulled out. Then we camped near the ship that the Botts said they found (*Desert*, November 1980). It was just about covered with sand. Mr. Smith said it had been there a long time; Indians had told him about it in the 1920s.

We intended to go back and find the Villa guns, but Smith got ill that winter and went on the Big Trail. He was 87 years old but still spry and a good shot. I never went to look again but I hope to this December.

C. O. Carlson
Congress, Ariz.

Mr. Carlson's business card which he sent us with his letter says he deals in "*ora et labora*," and that he was "established around 1879."

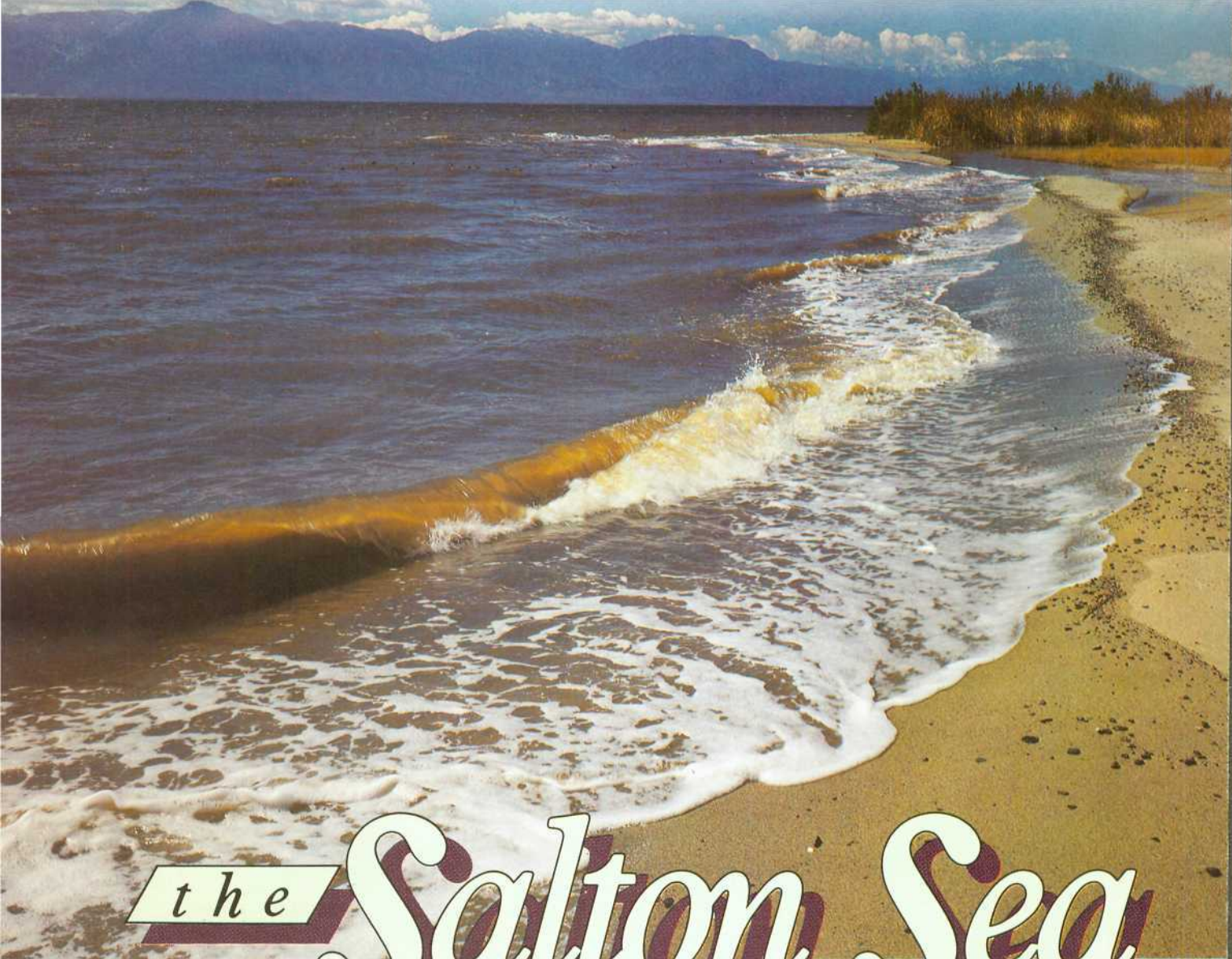
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the

Salton Sea

by PETER

*Troubled
Stepchild of Man
and Nature*

A L E S H I R E

THE 350 SQUARE-MILE Salton Sea is ringed with ghosts and glitters in the desert heat, mute evidence of geologic forces which have shaped a continent. This land-locked Sea, the remnant of a far larger freshwater lake which supported teeming pre-historic native cultures, is now the staging ground for some particularly imaginative and promising experiments in solar energy.

Today, the Sea supports a rich fishery, and may be turned to producing anything from mussels to shrimp in addition to possibly generating enough power from its salty, sun-warmed waters to supply a city the size of San Francisco.

The Sea is filled with leftover water, which has traveled half a continent in some cases. It is a huge puddle in a geologic landscape — a catchbasin formed by a vast sagging of the earth along the boundary between the two immense crustal plates.

These huge plates, light crustal rock

“floating” on the denser rock of the earth’s innards, meet at the crack known as the San Andreas Fault — which slashes through rocks and mountains from the Gulf of California all the way to Alaska. The Fault runs up the middle of the Salton Sea, and a slight spreading between the two plates along it has allowed the earth to settle some 230 feet, causing what is called the Salton Sink. At the low point of this depression, wastewater from 600,000 acres of farmland has formed the Salton Sea.

For millions of years, the rocks on either side of the San Andreas Fault have bumped and jostled one another. During much of that time, an arm of the ocean followed the fault line all the way up through what might be called the central valley of California.

Most of what today is the Coachella Valley was underwater. Ancient sea

shells, still bone-white and delicate, can be found on the slopes of the adjacent San Jacinto and Chocolate Mountains. In fact, those shells gave the Valley its name, *coachella* being the Spanish word for shells. Fossilized whale bones have also been found, indicating the ancestors of modern whales once swam in the area.

The jostling of crustal plates gradually elevated most of California, pushing the ocean back, but it took the Colorado River to turn the Valley into dry land and the Salton Sea into a landlocked lake.

The huge loads of sediment carried by the river were emptied into the ocean, and gradually built up a delta across the top of the Gulf of California. Over a period of millions of years, the river built a natural dike just below what is now the Mexican border. This 45-foot-high natural dike also seals the Imperial and Lower Coachella Valleys off from the ocean. Having created these valleys and having cut off the low-lying Salton Sink, the Colorado River then landscaped the

newly dried-out land.

The Colorado River for millions of years has wandered freely across California and Arizona. Before today's massive concrete dams were locked like collars on the throat of the River, it trailed off into the sand to form miles of trackless bogs during the dry months. Then during the spring floods, the unmanageable River would jump its banks and wander at will across the desert before making its way to the ocean. But every so often, the river would wander down the incline of its own ancient delta and empty itself into the Salton Sink.

For thousands of years at a stretch, the river would create a vast freshwater lake. The ancient lake, called Cahuilla, filled the Coachella and Imperial Valleys from Point Happy at the mouth of La Quinta Cove to the Mexican border some 15,000 years ago.

The huge Lake was 150-miles long, 300-feet deep, and thirty miles wide. All around its rim, camels munched grass and the ancestors of horses hid under bushes. Native peoples, ancestors of today's Cahuilla Indians, also established a rich culture from the bounty of the plentiful waters.

Indian accounts indicate that ancient Lake Cahuilla dried up 500 to 1,000 years ago, a victim of the wanderings of the Colorado River into other paths. Cahuilla soon evaporated, leaving blinding white salt flats. The Indian tribes dispersed and the animals in the area retreated into the mountains. Except for temporary lakes created by occasional spring floods, the Salton Sink remained a sterile wasteland for centuries.

Before the turn of the 19th Century, salt mining companies were established. In 1884 the New Liverpool Salt Company began operation, loading salt scraped from the ground into railroad freight cars which were run down to the fossilized sea on a spur of the main Southern Pacific line. But the Salton Sea was to return, this time as the result of a human blunder.

The California Development Company with 12,000 investors hoped to turn that desert into rich farmland with water diverted from the Colorado River. They planned to take advantage of old channels left by the Colorado River from its previous forays into the Salton Sink.

The diversion was to be made in Mexico and while they waited for permission from that government, the developers dug out the old channels — leaving the control gates in the banks of the river until last.

But the spring floods on the Colorado River in 1905 outran construction schedules. The rising river cut its own mile-wide flood gate in the banks and the headlong waters rushed down the enlarged canals. Soon, the entire Colorado River was rushing into the

Salton Sink.

Mexicali and Calexico along with fifty miles of Southern Pacific track were washed away, and during the next three years the water rose steadily. The town of Salton and its salt works were sixty feet under water. The 1908 Easter Services, to be held in Mecca, were cancelled owing to the imminent immersion of that community.

But Southern Pacific, pressured by its

although they have been hard-pressed in recent years to compete with a foreigner — the prolific tilapia imported from Africa.

The Coachella Valley Water District brought in the weed-eating fish to keep the Coachella Canal free of weeds. Somehow they got into the Sea and are now the most common fish there. But even the tilapia is threatened by the peculiar hazards of a land-locked sea.

DESERT MAGAZINE ARCHIVES



Men and machines worked the Salton Sink salt beds until 1905 when they were inundated by Colorado River waters.

own losses from the ruptured track, steamed to the rescue. The Railroad built a bridge across the break in the river's old course. A long line of freight cars, loaded with sand and rock were toppled into the gap — neatly plugging it and temporarily returning the river to the Gulf of California. However, it took the railroad nearly ten years and \$10,000,000 to find a final solution, a sum which it was never repaid despite presidential promises.

Meanwhile, the chastened developers of the Imperial Valley returned to their irrigation plans. Those efforts culminated in 1947 with the completion of the Coachella branch of the All-American Canal which brought river water to 55,000 acres of Coachella Valley farmland.

The wastewater from the 600,000 acres of irrigated farmland in the Coachella and Imperial Valleys is now what keeps the Salton Sea from drying up. Those waters, coupled with wet winters, have pushed the Sea's level *too high* for many area residents. This last winter, high winds pushed waves over the thin line of dikes protecting several shoreline communities, and briny water went sloshing through homes and businesses.

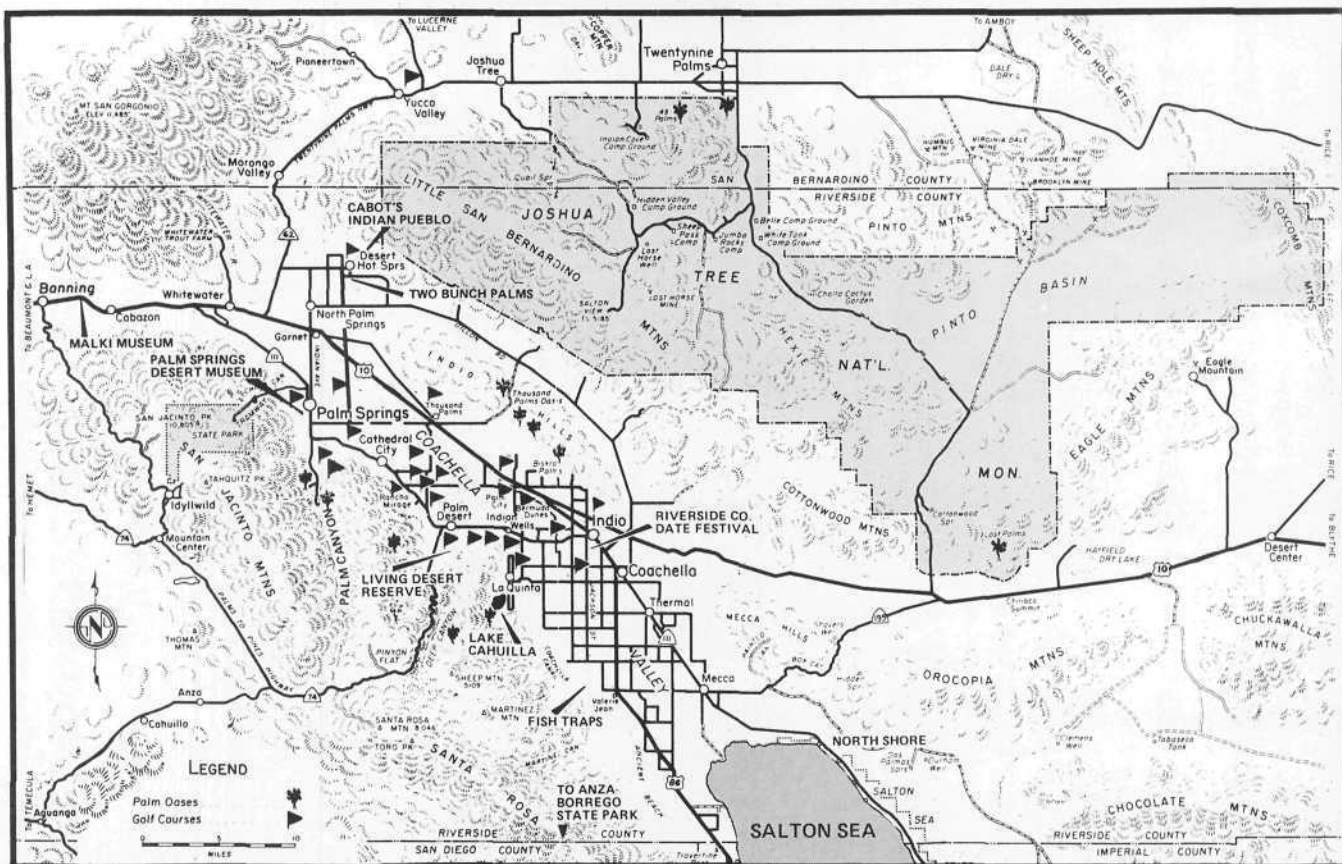
Flooding is just one of the peculiar problems facing this landlocked lake. The prime use of the Salton Sea in the past several decades has been for recreation and sports fishing. Fishermen catch 3,000,000 fish from the Sea each year. Corvina are the prized gamefish,

Each year, the sun evaporates six feet off the top of the 360-square-mile surface of the Sea. The sun leaves the minerals and salt that the water contained behind. As a result, the salinity of the sea has increased inexorably. The salinity is now slightly greater than sea water, and is steadily approaching levels lethal to its millions of fishy inhabitants. Already some game officials fear that several game fish species have stopped breeding.

Ranger Tex Ritter has been the alter ego of the Sea since he became the head ranger of the State Park there. He relentlessly promotes his charge, vigorously rebutting the occasionally publicised concern over water quality, and tries to figure out a way to save the fish — which he eats by the freezer-full.

Now it appears the Sea has a fighting chance. The long-suffering waters will soon move from being merely the remnant of the ancient sea, into the space age. A high-powered group including the Southern California Edison Company, the State of California, California Institute of Technology, and an Israeli engineering firm, want to turn the Sea into a solar pond, capable of supplying electricity to a city the size of San Francisco. In the process, they may be able to stabilize the water level and halt the increase in salinity.

Final plans have been nearly completed for a prototype solar pond to generate electricity. The prototype will generate five megawatts, enough to serve a city of several thousand, and cost



about \$10,000,000 to build. Dikes will enclose a three- to six-foot deep pond covering about 250 acres. A special process will then help accentuate the natural separation of the water in the pond into three layers of differing salinity. The sun will heat the denser water of the bottom layer to between 180 and 215 degrees, while the upper layers will serve to insulate the hot lower layer. The 215-degree bottom water will then be pumped into a treatment plant where it will turn a mixture of ammonia and freon into vapor, the vapor powering specially designed turbines which will produce electricity.

If the prototype works, the Salton Sea could be ringed with these ponds. If fifteen percent of the Sea were ponded, 800 megawatts of power could be generated . . . about as much as the output of a typical nuclear power plant. In conjunction with the solar ponds, salt would be concentrated in the ponded water, thus lowering the overall salinity of the pond and saving the three million fish per year fishery.

The solar pond potential of the Salton Sea has, in turn, prompted some imaginative residents to explore ways of using the warm water as a hatchery. Presently several projects are under way along the rim of the Sea for raising shrimp and other shellfish in the warm water.

The proposals represent the latest in a century-long series of human efforts to take advantage of the Salton Sink — and the awesome forces of which this glistening puddle is but an afterthought.

THE INDIO FISH TRAPS



The native peoples who lived along the long shorelines of ancient Lake Cahuilla moved on sometime between 300 and 1,000 years ago, leaving but a few perplexing clues to their vanished culture. And perhaps the most baffling monument of these peoples and that ancient Lake are the so-called Fish Traps, near Indio.

The Fish Traps are a row of stone-lined depressions which follow the one-time shoreline of the Lake. To this day, archeologists and anthropologists are unsure what the four-foot-deep pits were used for.

The most widely accepted explanation was that the pits served as fish traps some 300 years ago, about the time Great Britain was starting the American Colonies, but that theory poses two problems for archeological detectives.

The mute rocks hold no clue as to

how fish were enticed into the pits to be trapped. The landlocked Lake Cahuilla, which was 150-miles long, 300-foot deep and 30-miles wide at its peak, had no tides. Only occasional wind storms, which piled waves on the shore, changed the water level. No sign of gates or entrances into the pits has survived, according to Steve McWilliams, an anthropologist at the College of the Desert.

And the Fish Traps pose a second mystery. The shallow pits, which could easily be overlooked by a casual visitor, are not at the Lake's high-water mark. Ancient mineral deposits on rocks some thirty feet, above the level of the Fish Traps show the Lake's high point, McWilliams said. Those mineral encrusted rocks also bear the faint markings of Indian rock paintings.

McWilliams said the Fish Traps must have been used when the Lake was at a lower level and were only used for several decades before the rising waters covered them.

Since the rocks of the Fish Traps are only lightly crusted with minerals left by the evaporating Lake, McWilliams estimated they are no more than 300 years old and were not repeatedly covered and uncovered by changes in the Lake's level over the centuries. **2**



DESERT WATERBIRDS

—by—
KAREN SAUSMAN

I FOUND THIS BIRD in my swimming pool. It seems to be injured, it can't walk," said a concerned voice over the telephone. I responded with the standard question, "What does it look like?"

"Well . . . it has a long beak and a bright red eye, kind of a long neck and it's gray. Like I said there doesn't seem to be anything wrong with it, but it just can't walk, it can't take off, so it must be hurt. What should I do with it? Can you come and get it?"

As it's very difficult for us to pick up birds from residents, I asked the caller to

This great blue heron, found lost and sick in the desert, was removed to a golf-course environment and quickly recovered.



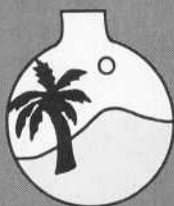
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bring it to Living Desert Reserve where we could take care of it.

The bird described by our concerned caller was an eared grebe, one of a group of waterbirds which are so well adapted to their existence as fishcatchers that they simply cannot walk comfortably on land and neither can they take off from land or a small body of water like a swimming pool. They need to run across

course area.

A study was done in 1974 on the golf course at Ironwood Country Club in Palm Desert. University of California researcher Collin Wainwright discovered that 28 different species of waterfowl and shore birds were attracted to the lakes at Ironwood Country Club alone. These included our eared grebe and also its relative, the horned grebe; great blue



The marbled godwit is a frequently seen resident of the Salton Sea shoreline, moving in years ago from its normal habitat on the Pacific Coast and Gulf of California.

the surface of the water for quite a distance before their short wings can get them airborne. But what was an eared grebe doing in a swimming pool in the Coachella Valley? To answer that question, we have to step back a moment and first take a look at the history of the birds in the Valley.

The Coachella Valley lies along the Pacific Flyway for migratory songbirds and waterfowl. This highway in the sky stretches from Alaska and Western Canada down across portions of California and into Baja California and Mexico. Twice a year, spring and fall, migratory birds follow the same pattern as they move back and forth from their wintering grounds to their nesting areas.

For migratory waterfowl, bodies of water along the way are used as resting points. In the Coachella Valley, the Salton Sea has been a resting point for nearly eighty years now. Centuries ago another natural body of water, Lake Cahuilla, was used by the ancestors of the eared grebe in the swimming pool.

Recently, however, the Coachella Valley has developed into a popular area for vacationers and for second homes. The Valley now has an amazing eighteen golf courses. Most of them have large water hazards. The lush green vegetation and blue lakes of the golf courses are an open invitation for migratory birds to stop over. Consequently there are many exotic species of birds that occur from time to time around the golf course areas and even periodically in home owners' swimming pools. Many native species of birds also take advantage of the golf

herons; Canada geese; mallard ducks; green-winged, blue-winged and cinnamon teal; American widgeons and shoveler ducks; lesser scaup; bufflehead and ruddy ducks; spotted, solitary, western and least sandpipers; greater yellowlegs; long-billed dowitchers; American avocets; and black-necked stilts.

Several species of swallows that are not normally seen over the adjacent desert land were attracted to the water area. These included the violet-green swallow, tree swallows, rough-winged swallows and barn swallows. Other migratory birds using the golf course were robins, pipits and killdeer. Redwinged blackbirds were also seen in the area. Since that study was conducted, the list has been expanded upon and now includes egrets, western grebes and many others.

The greatest percentage of these birds can be seen in the spring and in the fall during the migration season. However, some have stayed to become residents of the area. These include the killdeers, some of the ducks, blackbirds and herons.

With so many species of waterfowl so near at hand, it is not surprising that desert residents occasionally get a mild shock when looking out of their window. Even the staff at Living Desert has had some surprises right outside our door. Take the day when we looked out at the smoke trees in our desert wash and noticed something large stalking along. A closer examination revealed it to be a great blue heron methodically walking up

the dry wash bed. The bird apparently had become disoriented and exhausted. We went out and caught the bird and transported it up to the golf course lake at Ironwood.

Then there was the motorist who, driving along a street in Palm Desert, found a Canada goose walking up the road. Fortunately the gentleman was kind enough to pick the goose up and bring it to the Reserve. The goose had apparently damaged a wing which made it impossible for it to take off. The wing never healed properly, so this goose is still with us at the Reserve and has become very tame. It lives in the medical ward where it is the "watch goose" of the area. The following spring, we were treated to a sight of three Canada geese flying in formation back and forth through the palm trees around the Reserve calling to our "watch goose." Sadly, she wasn't able to join them.



MANY TYPES OF birds have been attracted to the Valley in addition to waterfowl. Bald eagles, for example, have been seen flying over the Valley and even stopping at the Thousand Palms oasis. Meadowlarks have become common around the golf course areas along with Brewer's blackbirds and robins. For this reason the Coachella Valley has become one of the finest birding areas in Southern California, especially during the spring and fall. Over 300 species of birds have been recorded in the Valley.

Residents who set up feeding stations in their yards are often rewarded with the sight of some beautiful species. However, if you enjoy birds, consider taking time this coming spring to visit some of the better birding spots within the Coachella Valley. These include Indian Canyons; the Living Desert Reserve; the Salton Sea; and of course, your nearest golf course lake. A short drive on Highway C-62 towards the town of Morongo Valley will bring you to the Big Morongo Wildlife Refuge which is a haven for a tremendous variety of birds including the spectacular vermilion flycatcher. A longer drive to the south end of the Salton Sea near Nyland will give you the chance to view thousands of snow geese resting there during January and early February.

Even though the Coachella Valley is located in one of the hottest, driest sections of the Sonoran Desert region, a surprising variety of birds can be seen there, ranging in size from the small Costa's hummingbird to the magnificent golden eagle, and from the highly desert-adapted cactus wren to the great blue heron. So this spring take some time to enjoy them. They are probably right outside your door. **[Z]**

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TOM GIANELLA

Brilliantly-colored polyester clothing is standard for Palm Springs visitors

P.S., I Love You

*A critique
by Bruce Fessier*

A CURRENT JOKE in Palm Springs, California, is one that's told by a local rabbi named Joseph Hurwitz: "It's the story of a man who is very pious," he says. "He goes to Heaven and it's very nice. There are clouds and angels playing harps and babbling brooks. But it's very boring.

"Then one day, the social director of Hell puts a notice on the board which says they're having a one-day excursion to Hell. It says there are no strings, so the man goes to Hell.

"They open the door for him and there's wine, women and song. He has the best time of his life! But at quarter to five the Heavenly Bus honks and takes its passengers back to Heaven.

"Heaven was intolerable after that. Boring! But what can he do? If he goes down to Hell again, he's been told he can't come back. He thinks it over and finally he tells the social director, 'I'll go down.'

"He goes down, they open the door, the Devil grabs him. They hand him upside down, they stick him with a pitchfork, and pour boiling oil over him.

"He says, 'I don't understand. The last time I was here there were wine, women and song.

" 'Ah,' said the Devil. 'Last time you were a tourist.' "

The analogy to Palm Springs and a few other communities in the surrounding Coachella Valley is apparent. Both they and Hell may seem like Paradise but there are aspects you should examine closely, pragmatically and objectively before deciding to move down permanently.

Palm Springs has the reputation, in part undeserved, for being a resort full of wealthy people wearing the loudest clothing this side of Miami Beach, Florida. The typical visiting male will have his bulging

middle encased in vividly plaided pants separated from a tropically flowered shirt by a gleaming white belt, all in turn set on a base of shiny white, synthetic leather shoes.

Polyester is the mandatory fabric in Palm Springs; silk and wool are unknown except during a presidential invasion.

Nationally-known humorists like to perpetuate the myth that only wealthy people over sixty are allowed admittance to Palm Springs, or Palm Desert or Indian Wells. However, one visit to the Cantina, a bikers' bar in Pioneertown, or Jimbo's, a jukebox pub in Palm Springs, reveals there's as much truth to that rumor as there is to the one about wine, women and song in Hell.



JAMES ENRIGHT

Desert Island Condominiums

Morley Safer, of CBS-TV's "60 Minutes," nurtured the "home for the wealthy" myth last year when he reported that in Palm Springs, every resident's dream is to have two Rolls Royces in the driveway. Some people play golf with solid-gold clubs, he said, and airport porters are tipped \$20 a bag.

Facts are that only thirty or forty Rolls Royces are sold by the local dealer each year, a number far short of fulfilling any such dream, and golf is taken very seriously in Palm Springs. Tony Penna woods are preferred and these are made from persimmon. As to tipping, most porters and waitresses are still forced by economics to live in North Palm Springs where there are no locked gates.

And unfortunately, Safer's commentary didn't amuse everyone. A local teacher appeared on CBS's "Your Turn" and reported that she knows Palm Springs children who couldn't come to school because their parents didn't have the money to buy them shoes.

Where to Go and What to See in the Coachella Valley

DESERT HOT SPRINGS: Noted for its hot mineral baths, Desert Hot Springs also is the site of the unique Indian Pueblo Castle hand-built by Cabot Yerxa. This four-story, 35-room "cliff dwelling" is now a museum and open to the public.

RIVERSIDE COUNTY DATE FESTIVAL: This annual event, held in Indio in February, has been called America's most unusual exposition. It includes a circus, parades and continuous entertainment. While in the area, visit the date gardens along Highway C-111 from Cathedral City to Mecca and on Highway C-86 from Indio south to the Salton Sea.

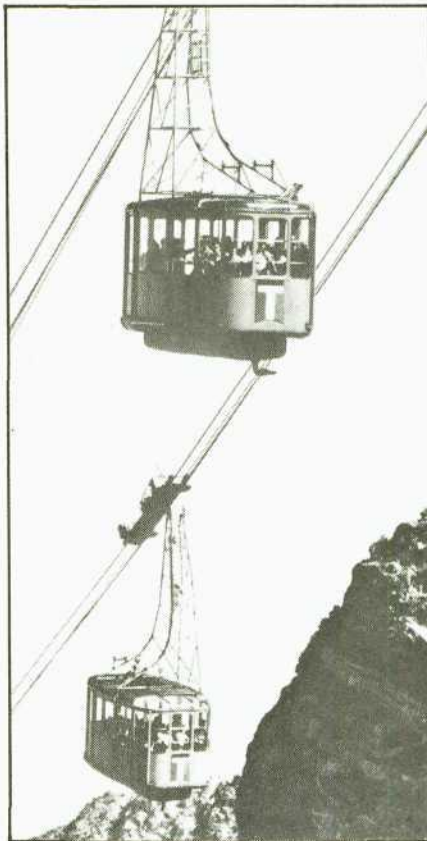
SALTON SEA: This body of water came into existence in 1905 when the Colorado River burst through a canal bank in the Imperial Valley and dumped into the below-sea-level Salton Sink. It covers the bed of prehistoric Lake Cahuilla (the baseline of which is still visible). Good area for many recreational activities, including boating, skiing, bathing and fishing.

LAKE CAHUILLA: Not to be confused with the present site of the Salton Sea. This relatively new man-made lake is located between Palm Desert and Indio at the end of Jefferson Blvd. It is named after the ancient Lake Cahuilla.

ANZA-BORREGO STATE PARK: Located on the west side of the Salton Sea, and reached by Highways C-111 and C-78, the Park offers spectacular desert scenery which is accessible by passenger car and four-wheel-drive. The town of Borrego Springs in the center of the Park offers lodging and supplies. There are overnight camping facilities in most areas of the Park.

FISH TRAPS: Located on the west side of the Salton Sea on Highway C-86. Consists of wall depressions in tufa-encrusted talus below steep hillsides. Obviously constructed by humans, but when and for what purpose is a matter for conjecture and heated debate.

LIVING DESERT RESERVE: Located in Palm Desert, the Reserve contains 1,000 acres of land dedicated to the preservation of native plants and animals. There are two major exhibit buildings along with six miles of well-marked foot paths. Also contained within its borders is the largest captive herd of bighorn sheep in the U.S.



PALM SPRINGS AERIAL TRAMWAY: From a base station located in Palm Springs the Tramway ascends to a height of approximately 8,500 feet from desert country to alpine forest. At the top of the tram there are a restaurant and picnic facilities along with many trails to tempt the hiker and climber, and during the winter, the cross-country skier.



MARRIOTT'S RANCHO LAS PALMAS RESORT: Opened in January of 1979, this resort is located on Bob Hope Drive in Rancho Mirage, ten miles southeast of Palm Springs. Recreational facilities include two swimming pools, year-round golf, and 25 tennis courts. It also contains five different dining and entertainment rooms.

PALM CANYON: Run by Agua Caliente Indians who charge a small fee to enter their tribal holdings, this canyon contains a beautiful stand of native *Washingtonia* palms which line the upper reaches.

BOTANICAL GARDENS: Located on Palm Canyon Drive in Palm Springs, this attraction consists of four acres of gardens containing over 2,000 varieties of desert plants from all over the world.

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL MONUMENT: This 1,000,000-acre desert preserve has its headquarters in Twentynine Palms. From the Salton View on a clear day you can see the mountains across the border in Mexico.

MALKI MUSEUM: Located between Banning and Cabazon, this museum shows the life and culture of the Cahuilla Indians. There are many exhibits of Indian artifacts and basketry, and Indian dances and festivities are staged throughout the year.

THE SPA: This Palm Springs resort is built on the site of historic hot springs which gave the area its original name of "Agua Caliente."

AL CAPONE'S HOUSE: This house in Desert Hot Springs, originally built for Al Capone, remained his hideout from the 1920s on and off until his death. In 1974 it was turned into a resort hotel known as Two Bunch Palms.

CAHUILLA POWWOW: Held annually in October at the Agua Caliente Fiesta Grounds in Palm Canyon, this festival includes display booths, tribal dances and many handcrafts. It portrays a dramatic part of Native American culture and shouldn't be missed.

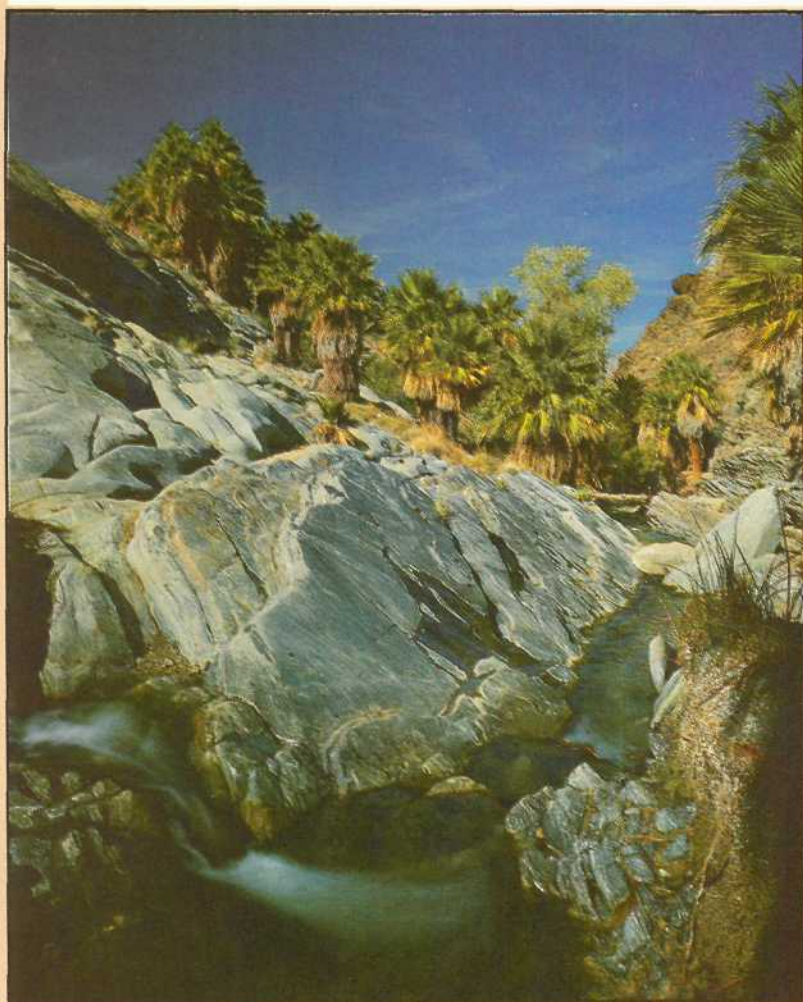
PALM SPRINGS DESERT MUSEUM: This interesting museum features two fifty-foot dioramas, showing the desert by day and by night. Many Indian artifacts are on exhibit and part of the schedule includes nature walks, lectures and classes. It is located in Palm Springs, one block west of Palm Canyon Drive on Museum Drive.

PALM SPRINGS RACQUET CLUB: In 1931 movie actors Charlie Ferrell and Ralph Bellamy built two tennis courts on desert land near Palm Springs, and many film stars took advantage of this convenient escape from Hollywood. Still attracting many people, this much-expanded resort is now the Racquet Club of Palm Springs.

Syndicated columnist Arthur Hoppe also had fun with the myth when he facetiously wrote that Palm Springs didn't prosper until 1928 when, "an elderly prospector, Jed Something-or-Other, struck a rich vein of pure polyester at what is now the corner of Farrah Fawcett Boulevard and Rip Torn Avenue."

"Today, polyester is used not only to make native garb, but in the manufacture of condominiums, restaurants, date palms and the pancakes and pie crusts that are the high points of Palm Springs cuisine."

The local media, on the other hand, is protective. It would never challenge the town's reputation for affluence or allege that pancakes and pie crusts represent the culinary peak of Palm Springs menus. Long-time reporters on the *Desert Sun*, the Valley's largest newspaper, remember when they weren't allowed to publish temperatures on hot days (or list smog or pollen counts) for fear of irritating the local merchants, even though one such merchant displayed the temperature on a sign outside his business and another (Von's Supermarket) still



JAMES ENRIGHT

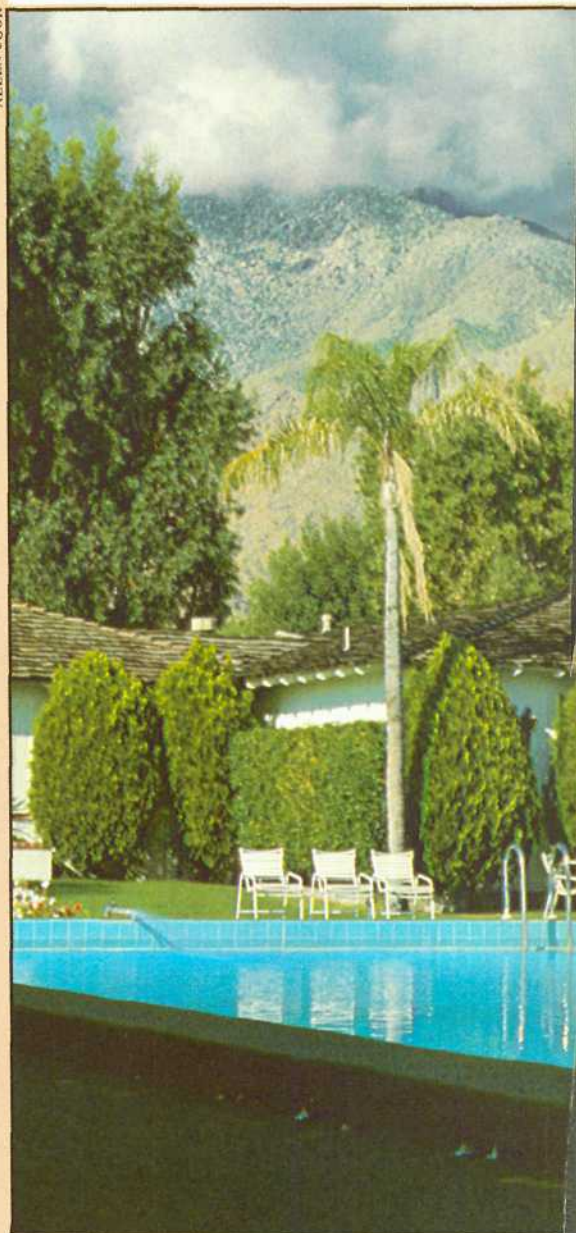
The oasis of Palm Canyon is administered by the Agua Caliente tribe.

does electronically on a billboard located many miles up the Interstate leading to Palm Springs. People seeing a frank "116 degrees in Palm Springs today" have plenty of time to turn around and head for home.

Merchants and government agencies, like the Convention and Visitors Bureau, can create their own images by paying a public relations practitioner to influence the media. For \$250, one Palm Springs PR agency will write a story about a restaurant complete with adjectives like "fantastic" and "unique," and then hustle it to the local newspapers, of which several will run the stories verbatim.

A typical "news" plant, which incidentally may also appear

ALLEN COOK

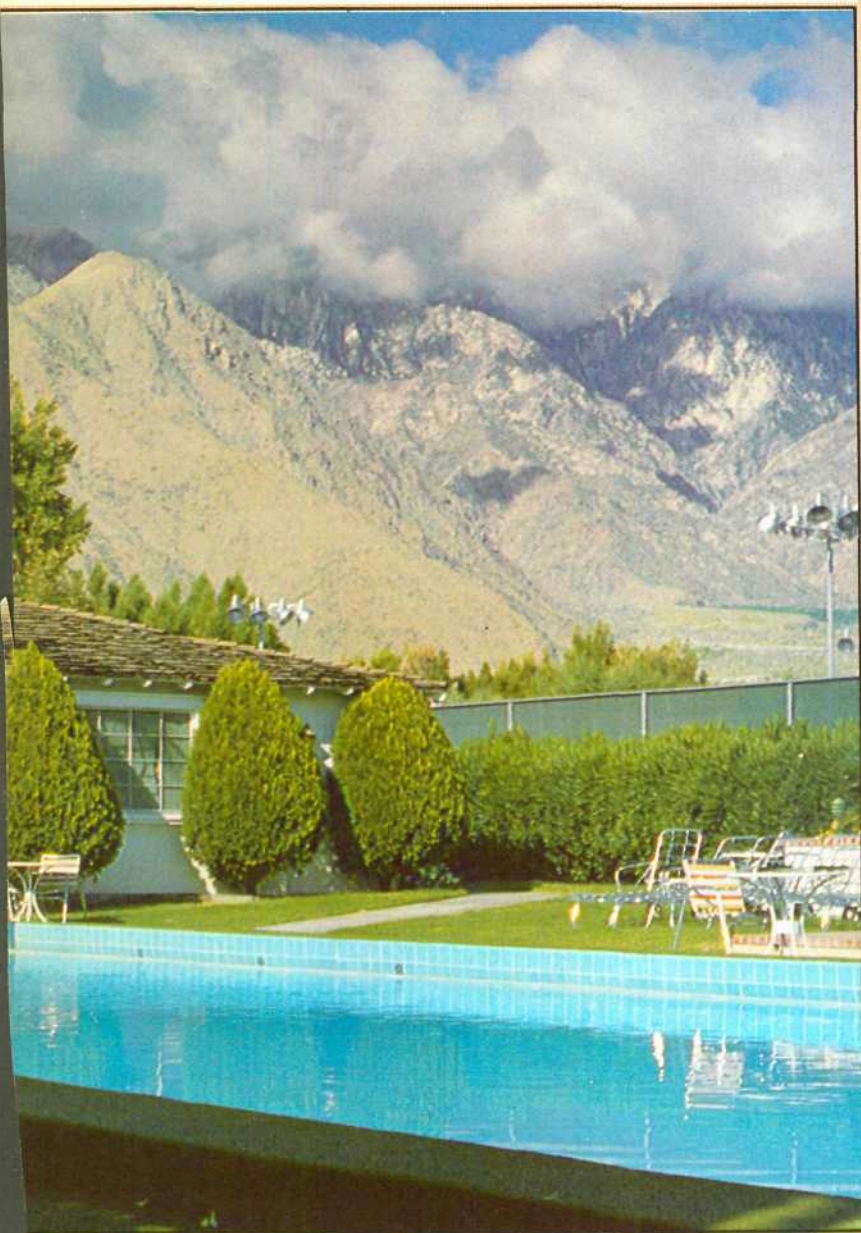


The Racquet Club, founded by Charlie

ROB MAHER



Publisher (TV Guide) Walter C. Annenberg's



errell and Ralph Bellamy, is still popular with Hollywood stars.

JAMES ENRIGHT



Desert Island Country Club

TOM GIANELLA



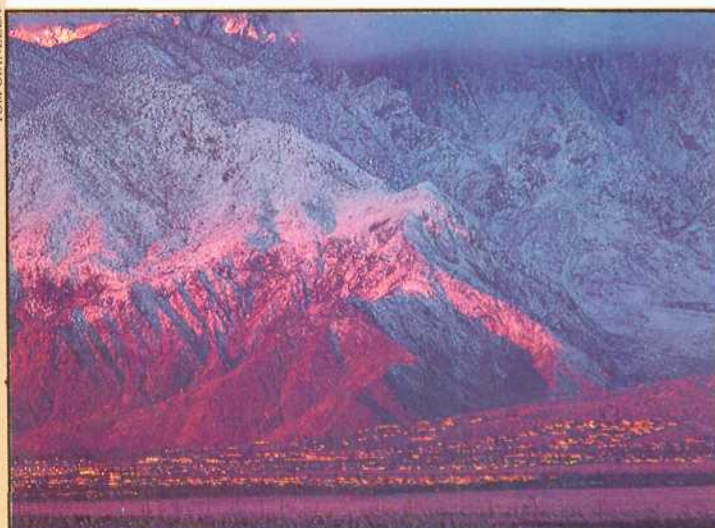
Celebrities play tournaments for charity.

ALLEN COOK

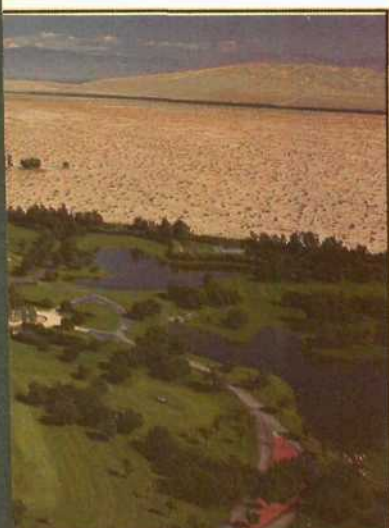


La Quinta Hotel

TOM GIANELLA



The San Jacinto Mtns. offer cross-country skiing.



ate covers many acres.

as far away as the Beverly Hills *Courier*, goes like this: "You might spot Frank Sinatra or former President Ford and Mrs. Ford dining at Lord Fletcher (but) the Sinatras also enjoy Dominick's and it's easy to understand why if you sample the dinners . . ."

Sinatra is visible in the Valley, but a local society editor says when a PR person tells her he is coming to a restaurant, she stays away, for ninety percent of the time it's a ruse.

Here are some other "ruses" that have been used to attract tourists to the Coachella Valley, plus commentary from someone who's been dispelling desert myths in print for a few seasons now:

"If you stand in front of Swenson's Ice Cream parlor in Palm Springs long enough, chances are you'll see a movie star."

Chances are if you stay for long, you'll first be arrested for loitering. Most of the people you see in front of Swenson's are teenagers "cruising" the main drag.

"Palm Springs residents all have great year-round tans."

The most popular pastime of visitors to Palm Springs is laying on their backs and getting a tan. The second most popular pastime is laying on their stomachs and getting a tan. But most residents under sixty, of which there are at least 30,000, don't get tans because they have to work. When they're not working, it's often too cold, too wet, too windy or too much effort to get a tan.

"'Restaurant Row' in Rancho Mirage offers some of the best dining in the world."

The critic who said that is probably selling advertisements on the side. Check a reputable dining guide from outside the Coachella Valley such as Mobil's or Elmer Dill's and you'll find very few listings for Rancho Mirage.

Nine out of ten of the restaurants along the Row are the formula establishments of well-known chains. Of these, only the Hungry Tiger rates stars (two) in Mobil. The Lord Fletcher Inn, privately owned, also rates two and the Agua Room of the Spa rates three, but that is in Palm Springs. Comparable to any at half the price are Howie's in Indian Wells or Billy Reed's at the north end of Palm Springs.

"There are no traffic jams in Palm Springs."

The person who said that never drove down Palm Canyon Drive on a Saturday night when the kids are "cruising." Motorists who have gained instant nostalgia for the freeways of Los Angeles.

"Most movie stars stay at the 'world-famous' Racquet Club when they vacation in Palm Springs."

Movie stars stayed at the Racquet Club when starlets like Marilyn Monroe were trying to get exposure there. Today, they own condominiums and houses. Bob Hope, for example, owns a house that has been unkindly but accurately compared to a TWA airport satellite.

Some celebrities still stay at the Racquet Club. But you're just as likely to find them at Two Bunch Palms Resort in Desert Hot Springs (see page 21), the Ingleside Inn in Palm Springs or the La Quinta Hotel.

"Palm Springs is now a year-round resort."

More people are staying in the Coachella Valley during the summer, true, but except in Indio which has its own utility, many of these residents are paying \$1,000 a month or more to Southern California Edison to run their air-conditioners. Most of the major hotels and many businesses still close for the summer. Those that do stay open feel compelled to reduce prices drastically.

THEN WHAT, one may ask, makes people come to the Coachella Valley to live?

Well, there are qualities about the Valley that are both unique and attractive. The environment in particular is noteworthy, combining as it does the amenities of civilization with almost instant isolation on the sands a few miles outside of town. And the San Jacinto Mountains rise so abruptly from the Valley floor that even the Walter Annenbergs of the desert feel humbled.

These mountains also provide canyons that are true desert oases. The Agua Caliente band of Cahuilla Indians have lived in those canyons for centuries but unfortunately, their heritage is abused in Palm Springs today both by them and by the white man. City fathers have ignored Indian traditions to create their own "look." Buildings are color-coordinated by the Architectural Advisory Committee and illuminated palm trees line the main street. No neon is allowed within Palm Springs but the Indians don't hesitate to plaster the surrounding countryside with billboards displaying ethno-economic messages.

The 180 surviving Agua Calientes, it should be noted, have since a court settlement in 1959 owned in severalty about 32,000 acres of land arranged like a checkerboard across the city map of Palm Springs. Although about one-fifth of this has been sold and some of it awaits development, there can be little doubt that these relatively few Indians are the richest, individually and collectively, in the nation.

Aside from a visit via toll road to Palm Canyon, owned and operated by the Agua Calientes, the Coachella Valley provides many outdoor activities one can't find in big western cities. People come for hiking or horseback riding through the canyons, hiking or rock climbing in Joshua Tree National Monument forty miles northeast of Palm Springs, tubing down the Whitewater River, sailing and fishing on the Salton Sea 47 miles to the south, and cross-country skiing in the San Jacinto Mountains which can be conveniently reached by a spectacular vertical ascent of 5,873 feet on the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway.


Those who prefer to experience the desert environment vicariously can do so at the Palm Springs Desert Museum or at the Living Desert Reserve in Palm Desert. And too there's the Indian Pueblo Museum built by the eastern expatriate, Cabot Yerxa, in Desert Hot Springs. Then there are the golf courses, swimming pools and tennis courts; more, it is claimed, than at any other resort area in the world.

The Valley is not rewarding, however, to those looking for night life. While most bars have entertainment of some kind, and some of it is quite good, it is usually to be found in the form of a piano or just enough assorted instruments and their players to be called a combo. A night club in Palm Springs called the Laff Stop offers straight comedy and the one floor show in town can be seen at the Riviera Hilton, a place where on Wednesday nights they serve a gargantuan buffet which for \$7.75 per plate is unsurpassed for quantity if not quality. The parties that make the pages of *Palm Springs Life*, the arbiter of local and visiting society, are either benefits or are held in private homes or clubs.

There is culture, though. The Academy Ensemble of the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hartford Ballet and many other top performers played Palm Springs last year. Such events are sponsored by private groups like the Community Concerts Association, Palm Springs Friends of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Palm Springs Opera Guild of the Desert.

Unfortunately, Community Concert tickets are sold by membership a year in advance, and tickets for the others must be purchased early if you want good seats. And they're sometimes expensive. Seats for an Isaac Stern concert last year, for example, sold for up to \$1,000 each.

The city of Palm Springs itself presented top jazz artists like Count Basie, Dave Brubeck and Maynard Ferguson last year at low prices, but the most popular entertainment for young people is still disco, the impersonal electronic variety.

Palm Springs and its surrounding Coachella Valley communities are indeed unique as their press agents are wont to claim but impartial observers may be inclined to offer a different definition of the word. "PS, I Love You" say the bumper stickers and that's true. You either love it or leave it though the reasons for either action are not often emotional. That's because the common denominator for residents and visitors alike is green. You must either make it or have it to survive, Palm Springs style. 

THE FORTRESS AT TWO BUNCH PALMS

by MARY EILEEN TWYMAN



This is Two Bunch Palms as it appeared when Capone's men chose the site for their boss's hideaway.

IN 1920, TWENTY years before the area now famous for its over 200 hot mineral baths became Desert Hot Springs, and sixty years before Desert Hot Springs became known as the fourth fastest growing city in California, Cabot Yerxa had been the only resident for seven years.

Yerxa had come from Massachusetts in 1913, self-exiled from family wealth which included links to the Cabots and the Lodges, to become a desert rat. He

homesteaded 160 acres, and with the help of a black burro named "Merry Xmas," constructed the first permanent building in the area, his home which he called Eagle's Nest Cabin.

It must have been a curious sight to Cabot on that day in 1920 when, standing in front of his cabin on Miracle Hill, he gazed across the desert emptiness toward what was then the Garnet railroad station and saw two vehicles, spewing volumes of dust skyward and

headed in the direction of the oasis which was about a mile from him on the other side of the hill.

Al Capone, living in Chicago, hunted by the law and haunted by illness of body and spirit, feeling more and more the true victim of his chosen way of life and chilled further by the cold winters, had dispatched some of his men to the warm, empty desert of California to find a place that would offer him warmth as well as solitude.

TWO BUNCH BECAME THE "IN" PLACE FOR PEOPLE FROM THE MOVIE INDUSTRY, AND THE SCENE OF MANY A WILD PARTY.



What was once a fully-equipped casino is now a comfortable lounge for resort guests.

When Capone's men stepped off the Southern Pacific train at Garnet, the first thing that caught their attention was the two bunches of palm trees rising up out of the desert landscape. Their eyes riveted on the patches of green sharply defined against desert sand and with habitually instant decisiveness, they climbed into waiting touring cars and headed straight for these palms, about six miles away as the crow flies.

Cabot, frowning, feeling slightly disgruntled, leaned against his cabin door as he watched this unceremonious intrusion into what he felt was his own private domain. But despite his annoyance, he couldn't help but chuckle a little at the sight of those two classy automobiles bouncing and rattling over the roadless and rugged terrain. With cars like that, they'll be the type that won't be able to get out of this country fast enough — so he thought.

Capone's men liked what they saw. The view from under the palm trees, even though just thirty feet above the surrounding desert floor, encompassed everywhere. The upper bunch of trees grew next to a shallow well, the lower bunch sheltered a small spring. Secluded, with a perfect view of every possible access, they reported to Capone that "Two Bunch Palms," as they called

it in their kind of English, was the hideout he had been searching for.

Capone ordered them to build a house. He wanted the walls constructed of the native desert rock and inset with stained glass windows. He specified a rock fireplace, oak flooring, beamed ceilings and a red tile roof with a lookout platform. The hot spring under the lower bunch of palm trees was contained into a pool built of the same rock. Walkways and a barbecue area, all made from this rock, materialized quickly and efficiently, for the boss was not a patient man.

Cabot was not too thrilled with all the building going on over the hill, and by this time was very glad that Two Bunch was out of sight of Eagle's Nest. He probably wasn't too sure who was homesteading Two Bunch; he could just tell that whoever it was, was "Big City," and this was confirmed the day Big Al moved in. A whole caravan of those fancy cars came swaying and tossing, like boats on a stormy sea, across that stretch of land between Garnet and Two Bunch. Gray dust and exhaust fumes rose to throw a murky veil over the clear sky, and Cabot could hear the engines straining and protesting the abuse. "Those cars ain't made for thet," he muttered to himself as he went back to


his work, trying to put this crude invasion of "his desert" out of his mind.

BUT THE SOLITUDE and quiet Capone had been so deeply in need of soon began to wear on him. Maybe it was because the silence and strength of the desert causes man to reflect, to search out the reasons and goals of his existence, but Big Al got restless. Maybe he didn't like hearing what that silence allowed his soul to say; and so, to muffle that insistent nagging, the boss put his men to work again. This time they built a full-scale gambling casino with a spa under it, complete with Roman tubs and saunas. Soon, Two Bunch became the "in" place for people from the movie industry, and the scene of many a wild party.

Capone and his gang left Two Bunch Palms sometime in the mid-1930s. His secret hideaway had become known to too many people, and it was time to move on. They left as privately as they came.

Two Bunch Palms is now a peaceful resort and spa, still catering to the "beautiful people" from Hollywood. Condominiums and tennis courts have been added, but vacationers still enjoy the same saunas and Roman tubs, and soaking in the hot spring pool under the palm trees. The casino is now a clubhouse, furnished with antiques, and plans call for removing the carpeting to expose the rich, oak flooring beneath.

There are only a few things left to remind its guests that Two Bunch Palms was once a fortress. The windowed rock walls around the barbecue area remain, with their unobstructed view of all possible approaches. And there are windows in the rock house looking out onto a narrow breezeway, guarding these approaches. There's a small door in the rock house leading to a former escape route and there's the lookout platform, where armed guards once kept 24 hour vigilance, which is now a sun deck.

No one is sure who planted the huge, twisted tamarisk trees around the resort. But their obvious age and the fact that because of them, Two Bunch is completely hidden from view when approached on Two Bunch Palms Trail, make one wonder if they weren't planted by the Capone gang too — one more ploy to achieve the illusion of disappearance, to hide Big Al's troubled head in the sands. 

DAN WHEDON

Coachella Valley History



Photographs Courtesy of the Palm Springs Desert Museum



El Mirador Hotel was perhaps No. 1 in 1924 when this picture was taken. Some of the old structure on Indian Avenue is now a part of Desert Hospital.



The Cahuilla Indians lived in semi-permanent huts called "Wicki-Ups." Their rounded shape was almost impervious to the fierce Coachella Valley winds.



GREGORY G. PROSOR, SR.

Bathhouse at the original Agua Caliente Hot Springs was built by the Indians at the turn of the Century. Today, this site, still Indian-owned, is occupied by the Spa Hotel.



Tent houses were a feature at the Desert Inn, a popular Palm Springs resort in the early 1920s. Operators by law couldn't (and still can't) call their accommodations "motels" or "cabins."



COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

Sign on Coachella Valley Land and Water Co. office neglects to mention the most important produce of all — dates — which were first planted about 1910.



Three or four inches of snow which usually melts by nightfall is not unknown in Palm Springs. This picture was taken in 1931; another "heavy" fall occurred in 1979.



This is the Plaza Center as it appeared in 1937, today approximately the intersection of Tahquitz-McCallum and Palm Canyon Drive as you look west. **2**

ANCIENT BEANS

OF THE

MIMBRES



Seeds and pods of the Chickasaw lima bean.

ONE STORMY DAY about twenty years ago a cowboy named Mark Martin was driving cattle over the rugged range of the Gila National Forest in New Mexico and during one particularly severe line squall, he sought shelter in a cave near an ancient cliff dwelling along Mule Creek.

The cave smelled dankly of man long gone. Indeed, it was littered with artifacts and in one dust-covered pot, Martin found an old Indian singlefaced bottle which contained more than a pint of dried bean seeds.

Some of the seeds were white and black, some red and white, but they had all been perfectly preserved in their sealed container. Samples sent to the paleo-botanical laboratory at the University of New Mexico were determined to be somewhere between 600- and 800-years old. It was safe to assume that the seeds had been entombed with a deceased member of the Mogollon Tribe of Mimbres Indians who inhabited the area at that time.

Some months later, Martin planted a few of the seeds and was amazed when they sprouted, grew and vined out to produce healthy pods that were well-fattened with beans of good taste.

In 1962 Martin gave a few more of the original seeds to friends in Hurley, New Mexico who also raised a good crop, consuming some and saving some of the

new generation of seed. These people in turn passed seeds out to fellow members of a rock and gem club in nearby Bayard and so, "ancient bean" soup became a relatively familiar delicacy on dinner tables in those two towns.

I obtained my seeds from that source in 1966 and planted them at my home in Payson, Arizona the next spring. The pods I grew measured from four- to six-inches long and contained from four to six beans per pod. Like the originals, some were black and white and others, red and white. I found it necessary to give the vines ample water during the growing season and to leave the seed pods on the vine to prevent the beans in them from moulding.

Our ancient beans taste much like our present-day string bean except that only the bean inside the pod can be eaten. The pods themselves come out of the pot tough, and taste something like cooked cardboard.


There's been some but not much mention in the literature of ancient seeds, when by chance ideally preserved, sprouting after a hibernation of many centuries. Seeds estimated to be 2,000 or more years old have been found in the Egyptian desert and successfully planted and raised.

I personally know of a Utah farmer named R. O. Coleman who, while plowing a field in 1967, unearthed an

Indian grave containing a crude clay pot with eighteen dried pits inside. Horticulturists at Monticello College determined these to be at least 500-years old and when Coleman got them back, he planted them and sixteen of the eighteen seeds sprouted, producing forty pounds of pods.

Coleman sent some of his seed to Miracle Valley, a religious training center in southern Arizona, where commercial quantities were developed and since 1969, have been sold on the open market.

Old seed buffs do get to know of each other. I traded some of my surplus with the late Louis W. Atlee of Waco, Texas. He had been raising beans from seed originally found in a pot excavated from an old Indian burial mound near Willcox, Arizona. These white beans were identified as Chickasaw limas (*Canavalia ensiformis*) and the originals were estimated to be 600-years old. The Hohokam Indians were known to have raised this bean during that era.

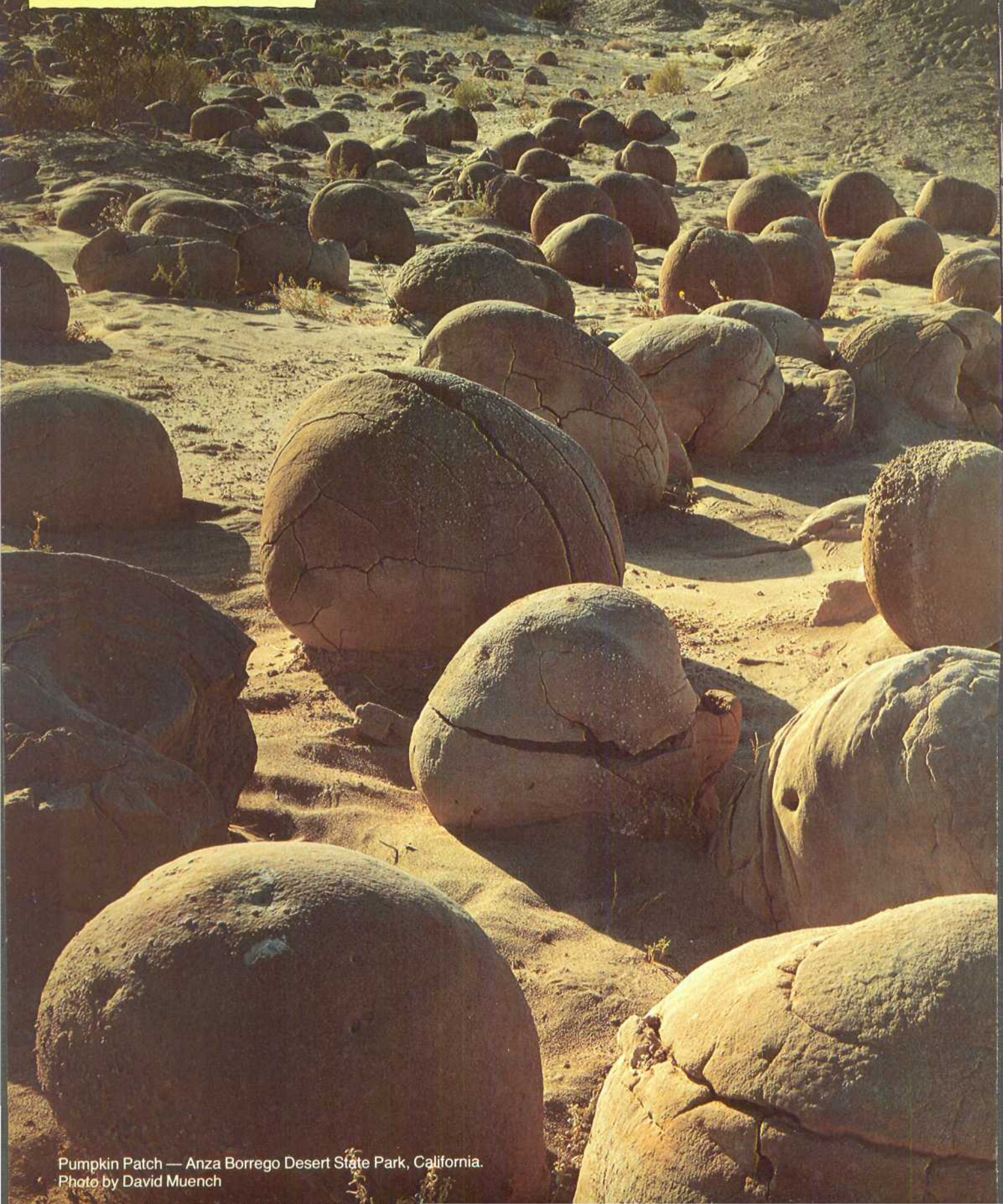
I have sent continuing generations of my seeds to friends in areas as diverse as Maryland, Florida, Washington and California who have planted them with mostly good results. So, if you see "ancient bean" soup on the menu somewhere during your travels, the beans you eat may just be descendants of the ancient seeds found by Mark Martin that stormy day twenty years ago. 

by **RALPH A. FISHER, SR.**

photograph by the author

Desert

TRACES IN THE SAND



Pumpkin Patch — Anza Borrego Desert State Park, California.
Photo by David Muench



THE OLD WOMAN

Who knows when she came
screaming down from outer space?

Did anyone see this joining
of an alien with our earth?

Perhaps she arrived in daylight,
unseen or heard by any creature.

We only know that she was buried
very deep in desert sands.

When she was found, she brought
to us excitement, pride.

Now we want her to be ours,
so we can look and wonder.

Thomas Frederick Teorey

Desert
PHOTO CONTEST



Zion National Park, Utah; Spring 1978
Hasselblad Camera, Tri-X Professional Film, 1/250 second, F11

This month's \$25 winner:

PETER BROUILLET
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Clarion

THE NOSIEST NEWSPAPER IN THE WEST

VOL. 2 NO. 1 • MARY EILEEN TWYMAN, EDITOR • JANUARY, 1981

PHANTOM DUCK THWACKS BUZZARD

Fontana, Calif.—Those who have been following the activities of the "Phantom Duck" will recall that early in 1980, he was taken into federal court by the Bureau of Land Management for allegedly organizing a competitive motorcycle event on BLM land without a permit. Then in March of that year the Duck uncovered a BLM version of Billygate and he thought, briefly, that he had that organization by its proverbial quacker.

To understand why the Duck risks a roasting, one must get to know a Kaiser steelworker named Louis McKey who is the Duck. McKey, 49 and four times a grandfather, has taken on such diverse organizations as the Riverside County Sheriff's Department and the American Motorcycle Association in protest over the way they run things, and won. Louis McKey is a feisty man. When something or someone rubs him wrong, he stands up and is counted, whatever the price.

The forerunner of the event in litigation was the famed and feared Barstow to Vegas Unorganized Trail Ride, officially sanctioned by the AMA and blessed by the BLM until 1975. This run attracted as many as 3,000 participants at its peak.

The event, or non-event, for which the Duck was prosecuted is a loosely knit sort of protest ride over parts of the course which started in 1975 and has been held each year since. Officially, the Phantom Duck Ride as it is called has never even

attracted the fifty participants which constitute a group by BLM rules and technically, therefore, did not require a permit. Its purpose was and is to attract attention to BLM's allegedly high-handed refusal to permit off-road-vehicle enthusiasts a voice in the disposition and use of desert lands.

After a long, expensive and bitter court battle, the Duck walked out a free bird, acquitted of holding an event that was actually a non-event and therefore not responsible for destroying public lands and in the

process, damaging flora and scaring fauna and so on.

The Duck nursed his wounds until March of 1980 when he read that the Sierra Club had held an event on public land that had been attended by the head of BLM's Riverside, California offices. Investigation disclosed that this event had been held without a permit so the Mighty Mallard filed suit against the BLM.

Jerry Hillier, the BLM department head involved, claimed that the event had not been held on public land. The

Duck then proved that it indeed had and BLM's Head Buzzard, as Hillier is called in the motorcycle press, was embarrassed, so embarrassed that he purportedly made an offer through the Duck's lawyer to settle out of court.

The Duck and his followers were jubilant, issuing a press release stating, "for the first time ever, off-roaders found themselves on the offensive, and went after the BLM for the same thing the BLM was always going after them for." Phantom Duck of the Desert, Inc., claimed that BLM conceded defeat on August 8, 1980.

The Head Buzzard, however, didn't agree. He has since disclaimed any such offer on the technical grounds that it was prematurely released to the press so once again, the Duck faces expensive legal action. Moral: the duck who quacks first and loudest may not be the duck who quacks last.

—Desert News Service

REMAINS OF OLD WOMAN INTERRED AT BLM OFFICES

Barstow, Calif.—The major portion of the Old Woman Meteorite, a rare iron and nickel specimen discovered in 1976 in the remote Old Woman Mountains of San Bernardino County, has been placed on exhibit at the United States Bureau of Land Management offices in Barstow.

The meteorite has spent the last year and a half at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History, where 942 (about fifteen percent) of its 6,070 pounds were removed for scientific study.

Preparation of the research piece exposed a six-square-foot surface on the meteorite for study. Samples from this

piece along with Smithsonian research findings will be shared with scientists around the world.

Later, a slice will be removed from the research portion, and will be etched and polished to show the unique and beautiful crystalline interior, and sent to California for exhibition along with the meteorite.

The exterior of the Old Woman Meteorite has been badly weathered and pitted through centuries of exposure on earth. But while the outside bears little resemblance to its original form, the interior still looks as it did when it fell from space.

—Trona ARGONAUT

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When She Came To Town, Everybody Took A Bath

Tonopah, Nev. — The story of the settlement of early-day Nevada is usually one of unmitigated hardship, but neither blizzards, Indian attacks or remoteness from civilization could keep the womenfolk from catering to their basic feminine vanity. In addition to pots and pans, rifles, bedding, the family bible and other necessities for survival on the frontier, a place was found in the wagon for a mirror, combs and brushes, a little ribbon, some scraps of lace and, perhaps, a little bottle of perfume. Other than this meager cache, women had to make do with what was at hand.

The elements were a woman's worst enemies. The winds chapped and roughened her skin, blew her skirts up and her wash down. The harsh sun robbed the scalp of its natural oils and the hair of its texture. Women soon found that the root of the yucca plant, when pulped and added to water, made a very agreeable shampoo. Rainwater was also collected for shampoos and natural borax salts were used to soften water. Fortunate indeed was the woman who owned or had access to sheep. She could run her hands through the wool and thus transfer the natural lanolin from the animal to her own sun-damaged tresses.

To sooth away the harsh ravages of the elements on their complexions, women had few of the creams which abound on today's market. Glycerine or sweet oil scented with rose water or lavender helped restore natural moisture and salves made from white wax, clarified suet or spermacetti, a whale oil derivative, were used to heal chapped skin. Sour milk was sometimes

used to bleach out unsightly freckles and windburn, as was buttermilk.

What she could not correct with her homemade preparations was their unfortunate tendency to run in hot weather and leave a streaked countenance behind. They also attracted flies and bees.

Crushed roots, berries and beet juice were employed to give color to pale cheeks and lips, although many women refused to "paint" themselves, a practice associated with those of their sisters who were employed in the world's oldest profession. Plumbago (natural graphite) and charcoal sometimes were used to darken sun-bleached locks and outline eyes to make them appear larger.

Simple hairstyles such as pigtailed and buns were the most practical on the windswept deserts. Rats, false finger curls and chignons took more time to care for than they were worth, but for parties and dances, hours would be spent twirling hair around hot poker or winding it tightly in rags. Since there were no such things as setting lotions or home permanents in those days, these were largely wasted efforts, and the hair fell straight as string the next day.

In an effort to become more of a woman than a pioneer, wild flowers were gathered for sachets and perfumes. These were dried and sewn into tiny muslin bags which then were placed inside the bodice of a dress. Sweet-smelling mosses and herbs could be tucked into linen closets to spread a fresh odor.

Changing fashions were difficult to keep up with in the west. Waist cinchers, hoops

and bustles all enjoyed a brief vogue, but were usually sacrificed for more serviceable garments since women were forced by necessity to make their own and their families' clothing. Unbleached cotton muslin, calico and cretonne were the standard yard goods at hand, but women often carded, spun and loomed their own woolens, knitted their own stockings, crocheted their own lace and, in many instances, made their own shoes.

Every woman had her Sunday outfit, however, which was carefully put away. This was usually a highstyle silk dress, a pair of mail-order patent leather shoes and a fancy store bought hat. Even if the opportunity to wear it came only a time or two a year, just having it made her feel more feminine. Even though plain and serviceable, the homespun sack for everyday wear was often embellished with a touch of lace at the throat or sleeves, a wide ribbon sash or columned ruffle around the hem.

In her home as well as her person, the petticoat pioneer feminized the rough, raw country where she was to live out her life. Even the crudest shack was scrubbed and scoured, decorated and arranged. Gaily colored calico and cretonned covered shelves, trunks and packing boxes and ruffled curtains adorned the windows. The woman of the west would also venture out to dig up and transplant wild flowers for her dooryard. It wasn't much in the total scheme of things, but it was all she could do and it made a great deal of difference to her — and to her man.

If one looks for the real civilizers of these long-ago times, it must be to these unnamed, unsung pioneer women who did their best to tame this wild land. The greatest compliment which could be paid to a woman was uttered by a grizzled miner in a long-forgotten camp: "When she came to town, by God, everybody took a bath."

—by Phillip I. Earl

—Nevada Historical Society

U.S. ALLOTS \$200 MILLION TO ALTERNATE FUEL RESEARCH

Washington, D.C. — The U.S. Department of Energy has awarded \$200 million to 110 alternate fuel research and development projects with the long-range aim of developing an alternative fuels industry which will help reduce dependence on foreign oil.

The fuel technologies to be

advanced are coal, shale oil, tar sands, lignite, peat, biomass, solid waste and unconventional natural gas. The products of the technologies will be chemical feedstocks as well as gaseous, liquid and solid fuels.

—Desert News Service

OREGON DESERT TRAIL O.K.'D

Burns, Oregon — The Oregon Parks and Recreation Division has signed an agreement with the Bureau of Land Management and the Desert Trail Association to develop the first segment of the Desert Trail in the Oregon State Trail System.

Because of the openness of the terrain and the wide visibility, a constructed trail is not required. Occasional animal trails and old roads make for easier walking from time to time, but are followed for convenience rather than necessity.

Constructed rock cairns or other trail markers should be considered primarily as general

direction markers, for orientation purposes rather than as precise trail location markers. The beauty of a corridor is that it makes it possible for the hiker to explore the terrain as it differs from season to season, and to leave little or no trace of his or her passage.

Preliminary planning for the Pueblo Mountains Section Trail Guide is well under way. Once the general route of the trail corridor is established, the map can be completed and the final description of the route can be written.

—Desert Trails

PRICKLY LAW PLAGUES MINERS

Tombstone, Arizona — This state's Native Plant Law, a measure that supposedly protects among other things, mesquite trees and cacti, is being enforced by personnel of the Commission of Agriculture and Horticulture. Today, if a miner finds an ocotillo in the way of a trail he desires to build — even on his own private land — he has to notify that

agency which has thirty days in which to arrive on the scene, inspect and tag the plant, before it can be moved out of the way. Miners and landowners in the state feel that the law is an impediment to the conduct of routine business.

—Western PROSPECTOR & MINER

SOURTOE'S MAIN INGREDIENT LOST IN ONE GULP

Dawson City, Yukon—The Sluice Box Lounge is frantically searching for one big toe to keep its customers happy and maintain the "Sourtoe" tradition.

Capt. Dick Stevenson, operator of a local riverboat tour, is scouring the Yukon for the digit so the "Sourtoe Cocktail" won't go the way of the Gold Rush.

Stevenson gives this explanation:

For nearly a decade, the cocktail—a glass of champagne with a pickled human toe floating in it—has tested the mettle of many a man, and attracted the metal of many a tourist in this former Gold Rush town. Many have thought of sam-

pling it, but only 725 have had the nerve.

Anyone who managed to down the whole drink and keep it down won an ornate certificate testifying the bearer was "a person capable of doing almost anything . . . on any drunken moment."

The drink was created eight years ago when a bunch of boys were whooping it up in the lounge of Dawson City's Eldorado Hotel, and Stevenson told them about the pickled big toe on the mantle in his log cabin.

It was left there by a trapper and rum-runner who had frozen his foot and had cut off the toe to prevent gangrene. Isolated in his shack for the winter, he pre-

served the part by pickling it in rum.

Friends decided that the severed toe embodied the right kind of old-time tough spirit and that the owner should be honored. The jar with the toe was brought to the bar, and the Sourtoe Cocktail was born.

Since then, tourists have been lining up in the bar to watch anyone who had the nerve to try the drink.

Until seven weeks ago, that is. That's when an unidentified construction worker from Ladner, British Columbia decided to sample the cocktail.

He downed the drink, promptly fell off of his bar stool and accidentally swallowed the toe. When the green color left

his face, his friends dragged him out of the bar.

That momentary bout with imbalance has created a quandary for the creators of the cocktail, and the bar that served it. T-shirts are sold all over town advertising the drink, and the tourists are demanding it.

So Stevenson is scouring the Yukon for another toe.

"I've got a couple of undertakers working on it," he said. "They're looking for a toe in Whitehorse right now."

If that doesn't work, Stevenson says, he'll have to advertise.

—Western PROSPECTOR & MINER

ABORIGINES TRIGGER GOLD RUSH IN AUSTRALIA

Perth, Australia — A gold rush has been touched off by two aborigines who dug up nuggets ranging from the size of marbles to cigarette packs in a rabbit warren at Leonora, about 510 miles north-east of here.

So far 300 ounces of gold nuggets have been recovered from the site and a Perth mining entrepreneur, Peter Engelbrecht, announced he had

bought rights to the area from the aborigines for an undisclosed sum. The biggest nuggets, at twelve, ten and eight ounces and about the size of an orange or lemon, were found by one of the many prospectors who rushed to the rabbit warren after the news of the discovery.

—Western PROSPECTOR & MINER

SMUGGLERS ANSWER DEMAND FOR PARROTS

San Francisco, Calif. — Ninety-nine percent of the birds coming into the U.S. from Mexico are smuggled. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates between 25,000 and 50,000 psittacine birds (parrot family) from south of the border are smuggled into the U.S. each year.

The popularity of these birds has been stimulated by advertising and television. In order to supply the intense public demand, most birds are caught wild in Africa, Asia and South America. One hundred million birds are removed from their habitats legally and illegally each year, causing rapid declines in many bird populations.

Most of the smuggling is

done directly across the U.S.-Mexico border. It is possible to go down into Mexico today and buy an illegal bird off the street, and the vendor will tell you exactly how to smuggle it into the U.S.

Mortality rates of imported exotic birds are high, particularly with smuggled stock. From capture to customer, up to eighty percent of the birds initially caught die.

Smugglers and wildlife officials agree that the profits reaped in the bird trade outweigh the risks of getting caught; \$50-\$100 million is turned over annually in the illegal trade of exotic birds alone.

—by Melaney Seacat

—Not Man Apart

U.S. TEAM TO CLIMB MT. EVEREST

San Francisco, Calif. — The Chinese Mountaineering Association of Peking has invited the China Technical Delegations of San Francisco to put together a delegation representing organizations in the U.S. for the purpose of climb-

ing Mt. Everest as far as Camp No. 3, at 21,450 feet, to help the Chinese develop future treks for hikers and mountain climbers in China. The hike is scheduled for May 1 through May 27, 1981.

—Desert News Service

BLM CHARGED WITH CALLOUS INSENSITIVITY

Sacramento, Calif. — The California state legislature has joined the growing list of opponents of the federal Bureau of Land Management's proposed master plan for the California desert by unanimously approving a resolution by Assemblyman Phil Wyman (R-High Desert).

The measure, Assembly Joint Resolution 87, calls upon the Secretary of the Interior to require the BLM to inventory all mineral and energy resources in the California desert prior to resumption of the planning process.

"The purpose of the study, would be to document the vast energy and mineral resources which could be permanently placed off limits if vast areas of the desert are closed under the provisions of the master plan.

"It is absurd for an agency of the federal government to even contemplate placing the vast energy and mineral resources of the California desert in perpetual cold storage when many of

their counterparts in government are publicly wondering whether we will someday have to go to war over the energy and mineral resources of the Middle East," Wyman said.

Wyman, whose district encompasses much of the California desert, also noted that he has received complaints from a wide range of interests, including miners, cattlemen, environmental groups, rockhounds, off-road vehicle organizations, and county and local agencies, concerning the BLM's "callous insensitivity" throughout the planning process. "It is this kind of 'the people be damned' attitude on the BLM's part which has generated so much support for the so-called 'Sagebrush Rebellion.'"

"The BLM would do very well to take the message of the Sagebrush Rebellion to heart and begin respecting the feelings of the public it purports to serve," Wyman concluded.

—Desert News Service

WILL THE DRY-WASHER BE RE-INVENTED?

by Kenneth Wortley

Death Valley, Calif. —

The real American prospector came into existence following the heyday of the early placer miners who harvested California's virgin free gold from its river channels and gulches by means of the pan, the rocker and the sluice box.

During those few years following the discovery of this gold in 1848, fortunes were made and squandered, but nature does not give up her treasures too freely and the channels were soon skimmed of the golden cream. When placer mining became no longer practical due to the crude methods of recovery available at the time, the lode-men took over and the true prospector was born.

These were the burro-men, who, for the next 100 years, were to roam the west from Mexico to Canada in search of the source of placer gold that nature left hidden and untouched for man to discover, if he could.

Nature had been kind to the early placer miners, laying bare her riches almost for the asking, but to the lodemen she offered a challenge, mastering all her resources in opposition. Sometimes, years were spent before the lode prospector found pay dirt. Often, this would prove to be float, and the ledge from which it came difficult to locate because of overburden.

The burro-men were a strange, temperamental breed of individuals who seldom teamed up with others of their kind. Some had failed at conventional placer mining, others had served their appren-



Inventor of the dry-washer is unknown but Bruce Minard, shown here with a typical machine, was an early and faithful user.

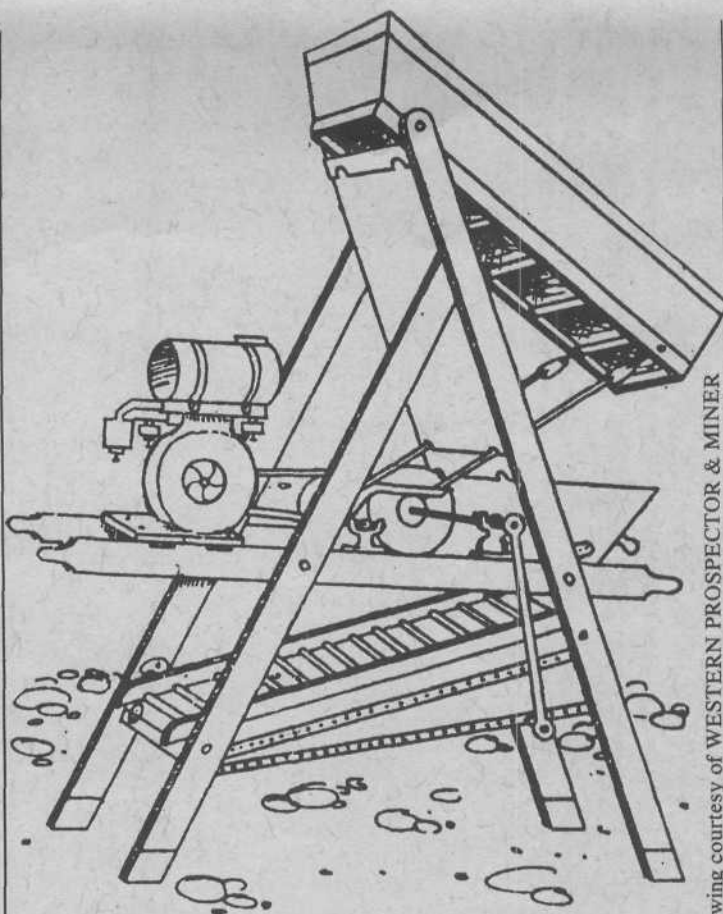
photo courtesy of BRUCE MINARD

ticeship at mining along with the "Cousin Jacks" and other hard-rock men who worked the first underground mines of the west. All had an amazing knowledge of geology, rocks and minerals. They had little stock in the myth that gold is wherever you find it. Experience had taught them it was to be found only in places where nature intended it to be found, usually in the vicinity of faults, fissures, and in volcanic areas. They were practical, self-schooled men who had little respect for the opinion of mining engineers whom they classified as educated fools.

As a rule, these roaming nomads never succeeded in finding the bonanza of their dreams. A few like Jim Butler of Tonapah and Hamp Williams of Randsburg were successful and reaped modest fortunes from their finds. Others like Bruce Minard of Mojave found their bonanza, but were unable to realize their good fortune and sold out for the price of a grub stake. Still others like Charlie Churchill claimed to have found fabulously rich ore in place, but for strange sentimental reasons, elected to let it remain undiscovered, apparently gaining more satisfaction from the fact that he knew the location of a lost mine than from the probability of becoming rich.

A typical prospector of the old school, Churchill spent his winters on the Colorado River near Yuma, Arizona. The rest of the year, his little burro-drawn covered wagon was a familiar sight along the roads from Yuma to Ely, Nevada. An even more colorful figure was Formation Ward with a college degree in geology, who roamed over most of the western states, making camp with his two burros wherever he might be. There was old Tom Keegan who worked out of Saratoga Springs in the south end of Death Valley, and Long Jim Hyman who made his home in an abandoned tunnel in the Coso Range, and many others of their kind who apparently found as much satisfaction living the lonely life of a desert rat as they did in their search for gold.

Although most of the old burro-men had passed on by the mid-1930s, a few were still around a decade later. One was



People constantly try with little success to improve the dry-washer by enlarging or mechanizing it.

a primitive character affectionately known as Burro Baldy, often seen riding a saddle burro along Highway 178 with two pack animals following obediently behind.

Old Burro Baldy's prospecting career eventually came to an end in a lonely mountain cabin at Rockhouse Meadow. His dead body, and that of his dog, was found by cattlemen during a fall roundup along with a note requesting that both bodies be buried in the same grave.

Perhaps the most colorful of all the burro-men was Casey Loyd Davidson Jones who spent his winters on the Mojave Desert and his summers in the High Sierras. Casey was an accomplished violinist and, from the Amargosa River in Death Valley to the headwaters of the Kern River, was always a welcome entertainer at the lonely camps of his fellow prospectors.

Aside from transportation, the most valuable piece of equipment the burro-men had was a little cracker-box machine known as the dry washer.

Water was no problem for

the early placer miners, but the nomads who took to dry country, like the Mojave Desert, in search of gold were often lucky to have water in their canteens. So the dry washer was a necessary substitute for the pan and sluice box. With this machine, a good dry washer man could always retrieve sufficient gold in small gulches below rich stringers to exchange for a grub-stake.

The identity of the person who invented the dry washer is not known. Perhaps he lived a thousand years ago. But whoever he was, he was the burro-man's best friend, for without it, it would have been impossible for him to devote full time to prospecting.

Sometimes the burro-men were able to recover more gold from some small gulch than just the price of a grubstake, as in the case of Long Jim, who netted \$2,000 in a few days at the Coso Mountains. At some twenty times the then price of gold per ounce, his little dry washer would have produced a small fortune today.

The strange thing about the hand-operated dry washer is

that it has always refused to work properly if enlarged to any size. During the great gold boom of the 1930s, highlighted by Minard's discovery of the Golden Queen Mine near Mojave, fortunes were spent in efforts to perfect a dry washer that would successfully handle material on a large scale. Despite claims to the contrary, none have ever proved entirely satisfactory.

During the winter of 1919-20, I was co-operator of a typical dry washing project close to the spot where a prospector named Goler found gold in the desert hills near Cantile. My partner in this venture was none other than the aforementioned Casey Loyd Davidson Jones. Our equipment consisted of one soap box converted into a dry washer, a pick, shovel, whiskbroom, thirty feet of rope, a hand windlass and a five-gallon can used as an ore bucket. It was my job to go down a thirty-foot shaft, crawl along the bedrock of a small drift, fill the can with gravel (using the whiskbroom to sweep the bedrock clean), drag this material back to the shaft, climb up the shaft, windlass the can to the surface and furnish the power to crank the washer. Casey elected to act as instructor, critic, treasurer and entertainer — an admirable example of why burro-men of this type usually worked alone.

Our daily take in nuggets amounted to about \$4.00, which wasn't too bad for one expert dry washer man and a tenderfoot learning the mining business the hard way.

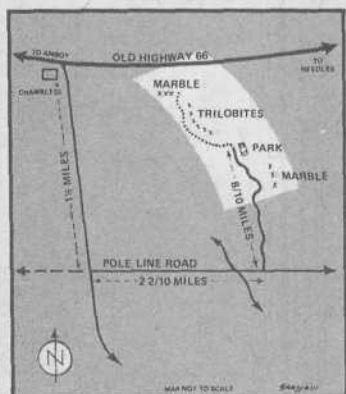
Although the colorful days of the old burro-men who worked the dry gulches of the desert country are now over, and the little contraption that figured so prominently in their lives is now only a museum relic, it seems likely that the dry washer may again be seen in action. With the fabulous price of an ounce of gold today, there is reason to believe that a new breed of dune-buggy desert rats may soon be following the footsteps of the burro-men. If so, perhaps they may find gold in some gulch overlooked by their forefathers or even be led to the site of a fabulous bonanza by the relenting ghost of an old burro-man like Charlie Churchill.

THE DESERT ROCKHOUND



by RICK MITCHELL

Collecting Sites: Very nice fossil trilobites can be found in California's Marble Mountains. To get to the location, take old Highway 66 to Chambliss, turn south on the road to Cadiz, and go another 1.5 miles. At this point, head east approximately 2.2 miles, following the pole line road, and then proceed north, toward the hills, approximately 0.8 mile. Here the road ends and a trail can be seen heading to the left, as you face the mountains.



Searching for the trilobites is fun, something like seeking a treasure. About fifty yards along the trail you will find yourself next to a reddish shale deposit. It is in this shale that the trilobites are found. To locate the elusive little fossils, simply extract a chunk of the shale and, with the aid of a knife or other flat instrument, carefully split it along one of the many layer planes. Be very careful when splitting since the break can change planes, thereby destroying any trilobites that may have been on the broken surface. It does take some patience. When a good one is found, carefully brush it clean and it should make a prize specimen for any collection.

The digging adjacent to this trilobite area was a marble quarry, and excellent chunks of reddish-brown mate-

rial can be found throughout the vicinity. This marble takes a good polish and for a time, was valued as decorative building material.

New Equipment: A small, lightweight, portable faceting machine is available from MDR Manufacturing Company. It features a heavy duty, full-wave speed control and positive angle stop. If you want a small unit that can easily be taken with you on vacations as well as used at home, I suggest writing to 22311 Ventura Boulevard, Suite 121, Woodland Hills, CA 91364.

Lortone Inc. has recently developed a new, high-speed six-inch trim saw called the HiBall. It rapidly cuts most lapidary materials, including agate and faceting gems. It employs a 6 x .012 inch Pro-Slicer blade and can cut slabs up to 7 x 11 inches. The work table is slightly slanted, to aid in viewing the work at hand, and it also has a high-capacity cooling system to prolong blade life, even at the higher speeds. For more information, contact Lortone, Inc., 2856 N.W. Market Street, Seattle, WA 98107.

Gemological Instruments Ltd. has recently introduced their new Rayner Diamond Tester. This amazing device employs the principle of thermal conductivity to analyze whether the sample is a diamond or a fraud. A green light will flash if the probe is touched to a genuine diamond and a red light will flash if the probe comes in contact with another material. This instrument should have wide application in the jewelry industry as well as for advanced rockhounds and dealers. For more information, contact the Gemological Instruments Ltd., Saint Dunstan's House, Carey Lane, London, EC2V 8AB,

England.

Covington Engineering Corporation has developed an adapter that can be placed on smooth shafts of 0.5-, 0.625- and 0.75-inch diameters. By using the adapter, standard lapidary wheels and accessories can be placed on these non-threaded shafts. The beginning rockhound can now adapt other equipment or make his own, using easily obtained standard shafts. If interested, write Covington at 715 West Colton Avenue, Redlands, CA 92373.

Helpful Hints: The Oilbelt Rockhounds have a suggestion for the cutter of geodes. They suggest that the geode be examined for the largest dome and the saw cut should then be made through this dome to produce the best agate display and/or cavity possible. If it is egg-shaped or elongated, then the cut should be made lengthwise. There are exceptions to these rules, but nine times out of ten, they work.

If you need a quick cleaner for your gold or silver jewelry findings, 7-UP has been used successfully. Simply dip the object into the 7-UP, rinse it well and then buff with a soft cloth. Be sure, however, to use different 7-UP solutions for gold and silver.

Have you ever been unsure whether you have amber or plastic? A quick, and quite accurate method of telling is to place the specimen into a saturated salt solution. Plastic will generally sink, while amber will float.

The Graves Company, 950 S.W. 12th Avenue, Pompano Beach, Florida 33060 has produced two excellent slide programs to instruct the lapidary enthusiast in faceting and cabochon cutting. The first is entitled "Introduction to Faceting" and the other is

"Let's Cut a Cabochon." Each is accompanied by a written, step-by-step program, and both are well done. It is much easier, especially when just learning, to actually see what is being discussed, rather than just reading about it or looking at a diagram. The slide sets can either be purchased for \$35.00 and \$30.00, respectively, or borrowed by clubs and organizations at no charge.

Travel: The International Gem, Mineral and Jewelry Show now sponsors two gem safaris and field study programs to India, Nepal and Sri-Lanka. The trips depart January 6th and February 17th, and the tour features an excursion to an emerald mine and a visit to the gem-cutting school in Jaipur. An optional flight to Mt. Everest or a trip to the Chinese border can also be arranged. Booklets will be provided, giving price information about precious stones available in the countries visited, as well as instructions on bargaining and purchasing. Another optional trip to the famous Poona mines can be made at the conclusion of the trip. For more information, contact Herb Duke, President of Intergem, 4840 Rugby Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20014.

Court Ruling: A recent ruling of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals says that a person holding an unpatented mining claim cannot prohibit people from passing through his claim. The ruling said that the public has an implied license to use public land and that a claimholder can require travel permits only when the land use agency in charge of the given area determines that they are necessary in order to protect the land, or if such travel would directly interfere with the mining operation. Otherwise, the public has free passage.



DESERT CALENDAR

Listing for Calendar must be received at least three months prior to the event.
There is no charge for this service.

Jan. 14-18: The annual Bob Hope Desert Classic golf tournament. It will be played at four different country clubs: Bermuda Dunes, Indian Wells, La Quinta and Tamarisk. Numerous stars come and play each year. Proceeds are for charity, with 70% going to Eisenhower Medical Center. Admission: \$8 per person for each day Wednesday through Friday, \$10 for Saturday and Sunday. Tee-off for the stars usually begins about 8:30 a.m. For more information call (714) 346-8184.

Jan. 17-18: Tule Gem and Mineral Society's 25th annual show. Exhibit will be held in the Veterans Memorial Building, 324 No. Kaweah St., Exeter, Calif. The "Silver Gemboree" will consist of display cases of cabachons, rare minerals and faceted gems. Also, there will be working displays showing faceting, silverwork, carving and slab sawing. The show is admission free and open to the public. Free parking and easy access for the handicapped are also available. For further information contact show chairman Ken Sheffield, 1539 So. Tipton, Visalia, CA 93277.

Jan. 17-18: Annual sled dog races at the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway. This traditional event will begin at 12 noon each day. Admission is price of Tram fare — \$5.95 per person. For more information call (714) 325-1391.

Jan. 23: Palm Springs Leisure Center presents Grand Ole Opry star Ernest Tubb and the Texas Troubadours in an all-western concert. Ernest Tubb is one of the all-time greats of country western music. He was placed into the Music Hall of Fame, and was one of the top drawing stars of the Grand Ole Opry for 36 years. One of his most famous songs is "Walking the Floor Over You." He will be performing at the Palm Springs High School Auditorium at 8:00 p.m., with admission price of \$5.00 per person. For more information call (714) 323-8277.

Jan. 23-24: Four Corners Opera Association presents *Kismet*, a musical Arabian Night of romance, passion, and intrigue set in fabled 14th century Bagdad. It is an exotic musical show. Performances begin at 8:00 p.m. Admission starts at \$21 per adult. For more information write Four Corners Opera Association, P.O. Box 897,

Farmington, NM 87401, or call (501) 325-9681.

Jan. 24-25: Palm Springs Mounted Police two-day rodeo. Events include a breakfast at 7:00 a.m. Saturday with a parade to follow at 10:00 a.m. Rodeos are scheduled at 2:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, and will be held at the Angel Stadium in Palm Springs. Admission is \$2.00 for children, \$6.00 for adults. There will be a western dance Saturday night at the Leisure Center with admission price of \$4.00. All proceeds benefit the mountain search and rescue operation of the Palm Springs Mounted Police. For information: (714) 320-4143.

Jan. 31-Feb. 8: 22nd Annual Tubac Festival of the Arts, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily from Saturday, January 31 through Sunday, February 8. Visit Arizona's oldest European settlement during the festival. Resident and invited artists and craftsmen will be exhibiting and demonstrating fine arts and crafts throughout the village. Southwest foods and drinks will be available. You can see historic village studios, galleries and the State Presidio Museum. For more information contact: Tubac Village Council, Inc., P.O. Box 4004, Tubac, AZ 85640 or call Lorraine Mitchell (602) 398-2163.

Feb. 5-9: 15th Annual Quartzsite Pow Wow Gem and Hobby Show, being held in Blythe, California. Inside the 8,500 square foot building are displays from around the country. There are dealers with gems, minerals and jewelry. Also, the largest operating display of lapidary equipment can be seen. Field trips by Quartzsite's Roadrunner Gem & Mineral Club are held daily. Admission is free and food is served daily from a cafeteria-style kitchen and dining facility. Dealers and displays will close Sunday afternoon at 4:00 p.m. to make room for a free dance Sunday evening. For more information write to Show Chairman, Box 881, Quartzsite, AZ 85346.

Ongoing: Wildlife World Museum, Monument, Colorado. Open Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., Sun. 12 p.m. - 5 p.m. Admission: Adults \$1.00, 50¢ for children. Lifelike displays of mounted birds, animals and marine life can be seen. For further information call (303) 481-2220.

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Practice Bull Ride Ends Rodeo "Career"

Blythe, Calif. — When I was just a little guy, I used to dream of being a cowboy. My friends and relatives kept saying that I was just going through a "phase" in life and that, sooner or later, I would grow up.

Well by the time I was 33 years old, I had a closet full of cowboy hats, wore cowboy boots and even learned to chew Red Man tobacco without getting sick. When I smoked a cigarette, it had to be a Bull Durham that was packed, rolled, lit and smoked with one hand.

I soon realized, though, that those things weren't enough. I decided the only way to really be a cowboy was to join the rodeo circuit for a while.

The next big rodeo in my part of the country was the one in Tucson, Arizona. I traveled there about a week in advance, and having never seen a Brahman bull up close, I decided to find a rancher in the Tucson area who might have one I could make a practice ride on. When I called the cattle ranch I found listed in the phone book, the rancher replied: "Listen cowboy, if you want to ride one of my bulls, it's no skin off my nose."

I arrived at the ranch about twenty minutes later and found the rancher waiting for me with a big smile. I figured he was probably happy that I'd chosen his bulls. He led me to a large fenced-in area but I didn't see a bull anywhere. Suddenly, the biggest animal I'd ever seen in my life came stomping and snorting out of a building in the corner of the corral. A ranch hand herded it into a small enclosure. "NO" I quickly blurted, "that's not what I wanted at all. Don't you have one a couple of sizes smaller? How about a bronc? I'll ride a bronc instead of a bull."

"Look mister," the rancher said, "I haven't got all day. Are you going to ride this animal or stand there with your knees clacking together?"

I swallowed once or twice and slowly settled myself down on the bull's back. So far, so good, I thought to myself. The ranch hand began tying a rope

around the bull, telling me to put my hand under the rope for a good firm grip. Then saying, "You're ready!", he threw open the door of the paddock.

The bull suddenly acted like he was standing on a bed of hot coals and my scream was choked off as he exploded out of the small cubicle. I never realized how many different directions the body could travel all at once. My head went forward, my legs went up and my glasses went over the corral fence. The ranch hand had done such a good job of tying me in that I couldn't let go.

Just as I was beginning to get the hang of it, the bull suddenly stopped bucking and started running directly toward the end of the corral. We were soon airborne over the gate and heading up the road toward the freeway. I decided the only way to survive this mess

BATHTUB CATCHES FORTY-POUND ROCK

Tonopah, Nev. — A dynamite blast sent a rock estimated to weigh forty pounds through the ceiling of a Tonopah house trailer. The rock crashed through the roof, landing in the bathtub.

Damages from the blast also included a broken car window, and the roof of another trailer was cut.

Reason for the bad shot was because other shots had caused the rock below the ground to fracture.

—Tonopah TIMES-BONANZA and Goldfield NEWS

was to hang on the bull's hump and ride it out until he got tired. Then, suddenly, the bull stopped dead in his tracks. I was catapulted over his head, did a triple somersault and landed flat on my back about three feet from the edge of the freeway.

"Had enough practice cowboy?" the rancher asked as he rode up on horseback.

The cast on my arm didn't bother me much at all as I sat in the bleachers watching the Tucson rodeo the following Saturday, and I didn't say a word to the guy in the seat beside me, who said he always wanted to be a cowboy.

— by Chris Harkins
— Palo Verde Valley TIMES

80'ERS TO MINE GOLD MISSED BY 49'ERS

San Francisco, Calif. — Homestake Mining Co. has announced a gold find in California overlooked in the 1849 gold rush and says it could have a mine and mill in operation by 1984.

The deposit is in the northern corner of Napa County, 70 miles northwest of Sacramento. The gold is in fine particles which cannot be panned and are not visible to the eye. As a result, the 49'ers passed over the area as unpromising.

Homestake estimates the deposit contains in excess of six million tons of ore with an average grade of approximately 0.7 of an ounce of gold per ton or in excess of 1,000,000 ounces of gold.

— Western PROSPECTOR & MINER

AVOCADO-LOVING BEAR RETURNED TO NATIONAL FOREST

Monrovia, Calif. — It was wildlife conservation aide Louise Fiorillo's first attempt to capture a bear since attending the Department of Fish and Game animal restraint school in Sacramento in June of 1979.

When she arrived at the scene in a residential section of the city of Monrovia, there were four emergency vehicles, five policeman, two city ani-

mal control officers, eighteen or so concerned citizens — and one black bear, high in a tree munching avocados.

A tranquilizing dart was fired into the bear's rump, and within fifteen minutes it was on the ground, groggy but still conscious.

The bear was blindfolded and hobbled, then lifted into a pick-up truck and driven high

OPEC BLAMED FOR HIGH UTILITY RATES

Palm Springs, Calif. — Stories of Southern California Edison utility bills doubling or tripling last year's amounts have been a major topic of conversation in Palm Springs, Palm Desert, Blythe, Desert Hot Springs, Yucca Valley and many other desert communities since July.

At meetings at Palm Springs High School, scores of disgruntled residents packed the auditorium to give an earful to anybody who would listen.

A woman representing Yucca Valley homeowners said that area residents existing on Social Security have received bills of more than \$300 for winter heating as well as for summer air conditioning.

"Where are they gonna get the money?" she demanded. "They're too old to go out and rob a bank."

A Palm Springs woman said her home has been equipped with a urethane roof, the walls and attic have been insulated and solar screens have been added. Even so, her \$2,000 utility bill showed she used 300 more kilowatt hours during July than during the same period last year.

Notably absent from the complainers were residents of Indio and points south, served by the Imperial Irrigation District, where utility bills are reported to be half as high as those of Edison's customers.

Edison representatives at the meeting claimed the rate discrepancy is due to Imperial's primary reliance on hydroelectric and coal-generated power, while Edison depends heavily on oil from members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

—Desert News Service

into the Angeles National Forest above Monrovia, and released.

"Operation Transplant" went smoothly. The bear had been reported in the Monrovia area before, and Fiorillo had tried to find it unsuccessfully twice in recent weeks.

— Desert News Service

BODIE

BIRTHPLACE OF POWER TRANSMISSION



A significant number of Bodie's buildings, such as the post office and Odd Fellow's Lodge No. 279 shown, are still standing.

by **ROBERT E. ANDREWS**
photographs by the author

HIGH ON A remote, treeless and windswept desert plateau east of the Sierra Nevadas lies what is fast becoming the best-known ghost town in California.

Named after Waterman S. Body who discovered gold here in 1859, but spelled "Bodie" to ensure the correct pronunciation, the town in 1879 was home to 10,000 people. During the mining boom, thirty companies produced an estimated \$90 to \$100 million worth of bullion.

Word of the Bodie bonanza spread throughout the west, attracting a diverse group of drifters, gamblers, miners and assorted entrepreneurs. Because of the harsh climate which literally isolated its citizens from October to May, life in the mining camp was anything but tranquil. At one time Bodie had 65 saloons, more than a dozen bawdy houses and was averaging at least one robbery, street fight, stage holdup or killing a day!

A big fire on July 25, 1892 destroyed most of the business district. Forty years later, a boy playing with matches started another fire which burned several dozen

additional buildings. By then, of course, most of the mines were closed and the majority of buildings abandoned. Still, a great deal of the town remained. Enough, for instance, to attract the attention of the state's historical societies who urged that Bodie be protected for the enjoyment of future generations. In 1962, its boundaries were designated as a state historic park. Rangers live there throughout the year, guarding it from fire and vandalism and maintaining the tired old buildings in a state of "suspended decay." This takes some dedication, since winter temperatures have been known to reach thirty or forty degrees below zero with hundred-mile-per-hour winds piling snow drifts more than twenty feet high.

Aside from a well-deserved reputation as the wickedest boom town in the West, Bodie has several other claims to fame. One is that the world's first transmission of hydroelectric power was accomplished here. Tom Legget, superintendent of the Standard Company, theorized that electricity could be transmitted over wires from a

distance. In 1892, a generating plant was erected on Green Creek, some thirteen miles away. This plant was connected to the mills by power poles laid in an absolutely straight line because it was feared the electricity would not be able to turn corners! You still see some of the power poles in place, but the station is in ruins, the victim of an avalanche. Because of the available power, Bodie's Standard Company had the first mine in the world with electric hoists. Also, the cyanide process of extracting gold from formerly worthless mine tailings was perfected at Bodie.

Today, one may wander through the shattered and scattered remains of the ghost town, imagining how it must have been 100 years ago when that high-button shoe moldering in the weeds encircled some dainty ankle or the now rusty hoist wheels were humming with life, bringing fortunes up out of the earth.

The scorching summer sun and winter winds have bleached the wooden bones of Bodie until each miner's shack glows with a golden patina, made especially rich when seen at dawn or in the late afternoon. The streets of the old town are strewn with the relics of its life. There are hundreds of rusting biscuit tins, kerosene cans, linament bottles, bits of crockery and the grinning teeth from some ancient mining contrivance along with a thousand more unidentifiable relics scattered throughout the sagebrush. Of course, these must be left where they lie.

And too, nature seeks to restore all matter to whence it came. Each winter the heavy snows press ever more relentlessly on the sagging timbers. A groan, and the snapping of some overstressed beam or post, and another wall or roof slants drunkenly inward. Sometimes the rangers are able to prop up an aging building before there is too much damage. Often, the destruction can only be assessed after the heavy drifts have melted and by then, it may be too late for shoring. But there is something very proper, even elegant in this slow ballet of decay. It is as if all of the rotting remnants of the camp are inexorably following their owners into the grave.

Bodie can be reached via a newly hard-surfaced road that intersects U.S. Highway 395 five miles south of Bridgeport, California (82 miles south of Carson City, Nevada). The turnoff to the east is marked by a sign reading "Bodie State Historic Park." This road is approximately thirteen miles long, the last three miles being unpaved but passable. Another route from the south off Highway C-167 (north of Mono Lake) may be taken, but it is unpaved and very rough. Since neither road is maintained after the first snowfall, usually in October, it is wise to make local inquiry before attempting the trip. Bodie's altitude is about 8,000 feet and the weather therefore is unpredictable.



A full-time complement of park rangers keep Bodie landmarks and their contents presentable for visitors. 7



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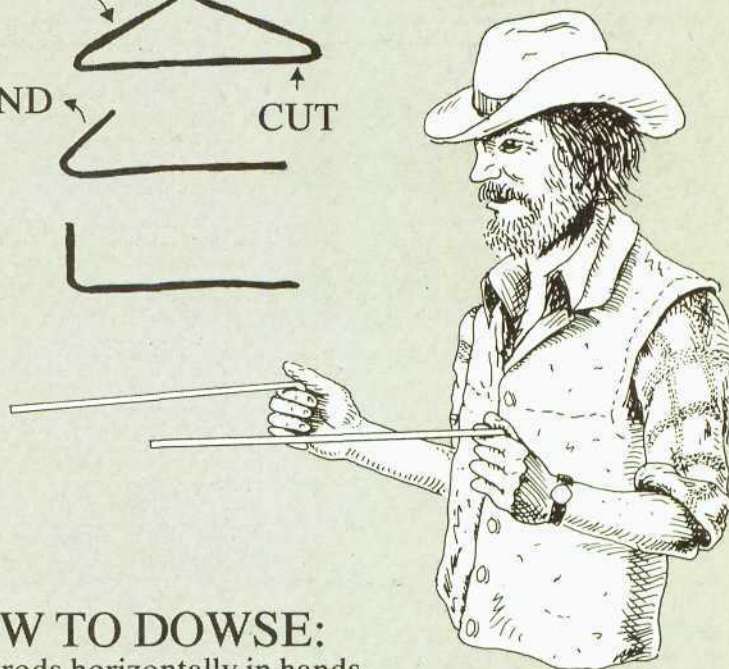
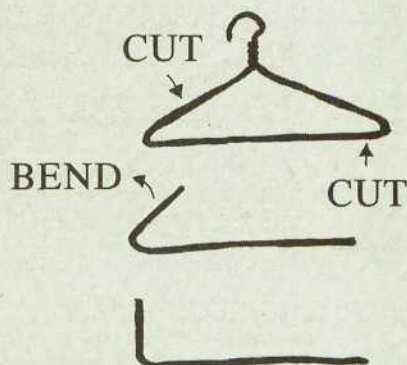
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CHUCK WAGON COOKIN'

Canned Trout Croquettes

by Stella Hughes

I WAS RAISED on fish croquettes, or at least, we had them every Friday, for all the years I was growing up. Living on a dry farm in Oklahoma, without even an old-fashioned ice box for refrigeration in the summertime, naturally fresh fish were a rare treat.

Dad wasn't much of a fisherman so we never got any from that source, but he claimed to be a great fish cook, so numerous friends and relatives, who fished Blue Lake which was only a mile from our farm, and the Canadian River, which was even closer and full of catfish, were always giving us some of their catch.

Often our generous friends dropped off a tub of catfish, and buckets of big, bullfrog legs (this was before limits) and we'd have a feast. We kids loved to sprinkle salt on the frog legs and watch them jerk and twitch. When skinned and fried, we thought there was no better eatin' in the whole wide world.

When we moved to California in the late 1920s and lived near the beach town of Santa Monica, where salt water fish was always available, we went on a fish-eating binge that lasted for years. Often, during the summer, we bought from ten to twenty pounds of halibut, haddock or yellowtail and went to the beach for a fish fry. This was usually on the agenda when relatives or friends were visiting from the midwest. Dad, as the self-proclaimed expert, fried the fish, rolled in cornmeal, in heavy iron skillets. Seldom did we bother with much else to eat, except chunks of fresh home-made French bread and butter, and a salad. Wine, ice-cold beer and boiled coffee were the refreshments.

There were no elaborate preparations

for our fish fries. An old quilt or two for placing on the sand, some boards or sticks for firewood, two heavy iron skillets and a coffee pot, along with a minimum of plates and serving spoons. Cornmeal and seasonings for the fish, and that was it! No picnic tables or folding chairs to lug around; no fancy grills or gas stoves or even jugs of water to do the dirty dishes. That was my chore the next morning, at home, when the sand, grease and fish bones had congealed to a thick paste and would have to be scraped from the plates with a spatula.

Recently I was visiting my brother, Lloyd Cox, who lives in Toole, Utah. We were reminiscing over the fish fries we used to have, and he asked me if I'd ever tried canned trout? Heck, no, I told him; I'd done some trout fishing, but we always fried them on the spot or froze them for later use. So he went to his well-stocked cupboard and brought out several pints of canned trout. They looked good, but I had my doubts the sweetish-trout would be very good eating, canned. Lloyd explained to me that trout used in fish croquettes were better than canned mackerel. He said he and his wife, Roberta, switch roles — she does the trout fishing and he cans the surplus. When I got back to Arizona I tried trout croquettes and found them delicious. You can substitute any other canned fish you may have, such as tuna, salmon or mackerel.

FISH CROQUETTES

*1 pint of canned fish
¼ cup chopped onion, plus two fresh green onions, chopped
2 eggs, beaten
About 1 cup cracker crumbs*

*A small amount of chopped green pepper or parsley (optional)
Salt and pepper to taste.*

Mix beaten eggs in fish with fork; add rest of ingredients and form patties with hands. Roll small cakes, or patties, in cracker crumbs and fry in generous amount of shortening. Brown well on one side, turn and brown on other side. Drain on paper toweling. Serve hot with creamed peas or creamed green beans, baked potatoes and sliced tomatoes, or tomato and lettuce salad.

Another way to make fish croquettes is by adding a cup of leftover mashed potatoes in place of the cracker crumbs. Left-over cornbread can be used as a binder for croquettes, but if the bread is very sweet, do not use too much, but add equal amounts of cracker or bread crumbs. Patties should not be too dry, but moist enough to form easily into cakes that hold together and do not crumble. If too dry, add more beaten egg.

The Navahos, the largest American Indian tribe, have a strict taboo against eating fish, as do their cousins, the Apaches, and some other Southwestern tribes. This comes as a shock to tourists traveling on the reservation who see the miles of fine trout streams and large lakes, especially in the White Mountain Apache's reservation located between Showlow, Arizona, and Salt River Canyon. Some say that many modern Apaches love their fresh trout, and I won't argue the point, but for every member of the younger generation that relishes fish, you'll find two dozen of the old-timers who say, "No, no, not me. It's bad to eat fish."

In over thirty years on the San Carlos Reservation I never once saw fish in any form on the menu at the Broken Arrow

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Cafe. I had to even bribe the cook to buy some cans of tuna so we Catholics could have a fish sandwich on Fridays.

Almost every river in the southwest is inhabited by catfish. It is the opinion of most fishermen that catfish should be skinned before cooking. After skinning, the fish can be cut crosswise in steaks about 3/4-inch thick, or filleted. Catfish are good baked in green chile and tomato sauce.

CATFISH AND TOMATO SAUCE

1/2 pound butter

About two pounds of catfish fillets

1 cup green chiles, chopped. Fresh or canned.

Several fresh green onions or shallots, chopped

1 can tomatoes, puree or stewed.

1/2 teaspoon oregano

Salt and pepper to taste.

Melt about half the butter in a skillet. Put the fillets in the hot butter and brown on one side. Chop all vegetables fine and add to tomatoes with seasonings. Turn the fish, and dot the cooked side with the rest of the butter. Cover each fillet with the tomato sauce and cover skillet until the fish can be pierced with a fork, about ten minutes.

FROG LEGS

First, after skinning, soak them an hour in cold water to which some vinegar has been added. Drain, wipe dry, and cook as follows:

To fry, roll in flour seasoned with salt, pepper and Accent, and fry, not too rapidly, preferably in butter or oil.

To grill, prepare three tablespoons melted butter, salt and a pinch of pepper, into which dip the frog legs. Then roll in bread crumbs and broil for four to six minutes on each side, or until the meat pulls away from the bone, much as would fried chicken when it is well done.

An easy tartar sauce is made by combining 1 cup mayonnaise, 3 tablespoons finely chopped dill pickle, 1 tablespoon snipped parsley, 2 teaspoons chopped canned pimento and 1 teaspoon grated onion, then chill.

Occasionally I run across a new product, at least new to me, and I like to share these with *Desert* readers. A rancher friend recently brought me a one pound can of cultured buttermilk powder, and already I've found a dozen uses for it. One of the best is using 1 cup of buttermilk (made from the powder) as a dip for fish fillets. You just roll in fine cracker crumbs and fry the usual way. A can of the buttermilk powder is also great to take on camping trips for using in pancakes, cornbread, biscuits, and for making ranch-style salad dressing. A one-pound can of buttermilk powder makes five quarts of liquid buttermilk. 

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THE LIVING DESERT

Why The Desert Wind?

by Susan Durr Nix



KAREN SAUSMAN

WHETHER THE desert where you live is high or low, north or south, frequently snowy or rarely so, it has in common with other North American deserts dryness, daytime heat and nighttime cold. And whether your desert is typified by sage or Joshua trees, creosote bush or giant saguaros, it will be windy. Wind is a constant of desert climate rather than an aberration, even though people tend to think first of dunes, sun, sand, thirst, thunderheads, vultures, cactus, tumbleweeds — everything, in short, but the wind which is intimately associated with all of these stock desert images.

Take sand, for instance: The particles are uniformly rounded and smooth, not, as seems likely, from the tumbling action of water but from the abrasive grinding, grain against grain, of a wind storm. The magnificent symmetry of crescent-shaped dunes is a wind creation, as are the random ripples sculpted into the surface of less spectacular dune formations. Wind also steals the lightweight sand from rocky terrain and polishes the stones into desert pavement.

Wind is horizontal or vertical moving air. It moves because the air is heated unevenly, causing unequal atmospheric pressures that try to balance themselves. If the sun warmed the air directly, the air's temperature would be uniform, but

it doesn't. The sun warms the earth's surface and that surface, which in turn gives off heat to the air, may be an ocean, a rocky hillside, a forest, an alfalfa field or an iceberg. In its endless variety, the earth's exterior absorbs different amounts of solar energy and consequently heats the air above it to different temperatures.

The mysteries of the seven o'clock news satellite picture with its asymmetrical high and low pressure systems begins to unravel with a few simple facts about air and wind. The warmer the air, the lighter it is and the less it presses on the ground. This is the weatherman's "low." Colder, heavier air exerts more pressure on the ground; it is a "high." When warm air rises, cold air moves in under it. This movement creates a breeze, or if it moves in fast, a strong, tumbleweed tumbling wind. The balancing act of these highs and lows makes weather.

Heat and humidity go hand in hand because warm air holds more moisture than cold air. Why then do we have dry heat in the desert? Our great American deserts are surrounded by mountains which force moist air moving east from the Pacific Coast or west from the Great Plains up their slopes. As it moves up and cools, its moisture holding ability drops. The excess is released as rain or

snow before it gets over the mountains. What's left is cold, dry air which runs down the other side into the desert valley, warming up and consequently sucking up moisture as it goes. But there's isn't much to suck up, so the warm air stays dry. Our deserts get less than ten inches of rain a year, streambeds are dry and other sources of moisture are lacking.

Of course some warm moist air sneaks around the mountains or enters the desert through natural breaks in the ranges. When it is funneled through mountain passes, it often arrives as a roaring wind and kicks up a sandstorm. Most "sandstorms" are really dust storms. Heavy sand stays nearer the ground, traveling across it and sandblasting everything in its path. Powerful sandstorms can fell telephone poles and strip the paint from cars and houses. Dust storms, on the other hand, blow thousands of feet into the air. The fine particles invade everything, sealed or not. These storms are the agony of desert housekeepers, whose kitchen counters, mini-blinds and floors are quickly coated with a fine layer of grit.

Whether or not they are accompanied by sand or dust, warm winds over the desert are generally not impeded by vegetation (unless they meet a planted windbreak of trees like tamarisks) or

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topographic obstacles like dunes and mesas. They dehydrate the soil and dessicate plant life. Successful desert plants protect themselves from drying winds with a variety of adaptations. Cactus stores its own water, and some varieties break the force of the wind with a dense coat of interlocking spines. Winds leave people thirsty too because on a hot gusty day, we perspire up to one quart of water an hour. It's possible to be literally dried up and mummified during a severe wind like a Saharan sandstorm.

The desert creates its own winds, too, the most spectacular of which is the tornado's harmless cousin, the dust devil. These little whirlwinds or *tornillos* are born when the air rising over a superheated patch of ground is joggled, perhaps by an animal, or chances to turn around a small obstacle. The air spirals upward and inward, picking up speed, dust and debris as it goes. Air is drawn in at the bottom to replace the updraft. Dust devils may spin more than ninety miles per hour, but thirty to forty is probably more usual.

When the hot air is not disturbed, it rises as a vertical current called a thermal. It, too, is fed by surrounding air rushing in to replace the upward bound hot air. Birds like hawks and vultures ride these thermals high in the sky, soaring effortlessly, without a wing beat, in a circle that defines the dimensions of the current.

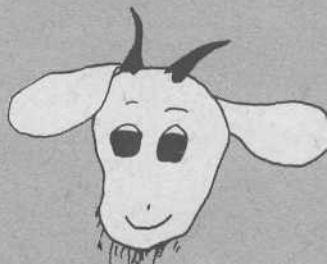
A small puffy cloud usually forms at the top of a fast rising thermal, because the cooling air releases moisture in the form of cloud droplets. Now cold and dry, the air returns to the earth. When this upward and downward movement of air is especially strong, surface winds blow and the cloudlets accumulate to form a thunderhead. A dramatic summer storm fills the sky with lightning and rain falls in sheets.

Daily desert winds are frequently the result of differences in the rate of heating and cooling of mountain slopes and the desert floor. In the morning, the mountains' sides warm up faster than the sand, heating the air above them, which rises. Cooler air in the valley moves up the mountains, creating a breeze. When the sun goes down, the slopes are the first to lose their warmth, so the situation is reversed and mountain air blows down into the valleys.

Our deserts are visited by many other winds. Some, like Southern California's Santa Ana, are bone-dry north winds that sweep away smog and bring beautiful weather. Others move humid air up from Mexico through the Gulf of California or polar air over the Cascades and Rockies from the central states, causing summer and winter storms. Whatever their source, winds are a desert phenomena as fundamental and normal as heat and cold, rain and aridity. 

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The

COLORADO

by VIRGINIA A. GREENE

photographs by ALAN BENOIT

A GREAT, GRAY jackrabbit bounded across the dirt road, a confusion of angles punctuating earth and sky in a staccato path. Cloud shadow stained the land as eastern mountains gave up the sun. Rocks and mesquite remained black on gently sloping dunes, and tumbleweeds tangled with each other, waiting for the wind. We had returned to the River. There were changes; both of us — the River and I — had changed.

We had gone there a lot in the early days. After chores were done. Or to dig up young trees to take back and plant along the edges of the cows' tanks. Or on picnics. It was good to live near the River. It was a relief from the hot sands and arid acres people worked so hard to farm. And we had fun there when we were growing up. It was water. And it promised something.

People have always made their way to the Colorado River. Early Indians lived along its banks and ate its fish; pioneers cursed it and crossed it on their way to what appeared to be a more promising place somewhere else; steamboats carried passengers and cargo to settlements upriver and they brought rich ore back downstream. Farmlands were developed from the heavy silt deposited over the years when the old renegade overran its banks. Towns and cities came alive along those same banks, and dams were built and the water was parceled out.

The River has always been a treasured resource. Convenience and ingenuity, and desire and big-thinking have altered the arid boundary of California on the east. It fast has become an oasis. What was once just a water resource has been expanded into one of the largest and most popular recreation areas in the nation.

Julian Rhinehart, dispensing statistics from his Bureau of Reclamation office in Boulder City, reports that 100 percent of the water is diverted — either to the United States or Mexico — for drinking or for agriculture. All reservoirs have been filling at the rate of 19,000 feet-per-second since the filling process began in 1961. On May 1 of this year, the goal was reached, the obligation to divert 1½ million acre-feet to Mexico each year is being met, and the United States and Mexican water allocation treaty of 1944 is being fulfilled. Water levels during rainy and dry seasons vary very little,

and a series of seven dams stretching from Lake Mead to the Mexican border have harnessed one of America's most respected and feared waterways.

The temperamental years of drought are gone. The once capricious sandbars are smoothed and settled. Willful whirlpools are seldom found. The Colorado. The River that once wrecked such havoc under its floodwaters has become a playground for millions.

"People need to recreate and they come to the river to do it," Jim Mack, naturalist for the National Park Service at Katherine Landing, looked across the windshield of his boat. He watched a fisherman as he rebaited his hook.

"It's phenomenal. We put about a million people a year through this area, alone. And 83 percent of them are from Southern California. Fish and Game people say the boat population is up ten percent over last year." Jim shut down the boat's engine and we drifted in the abrupt silence.

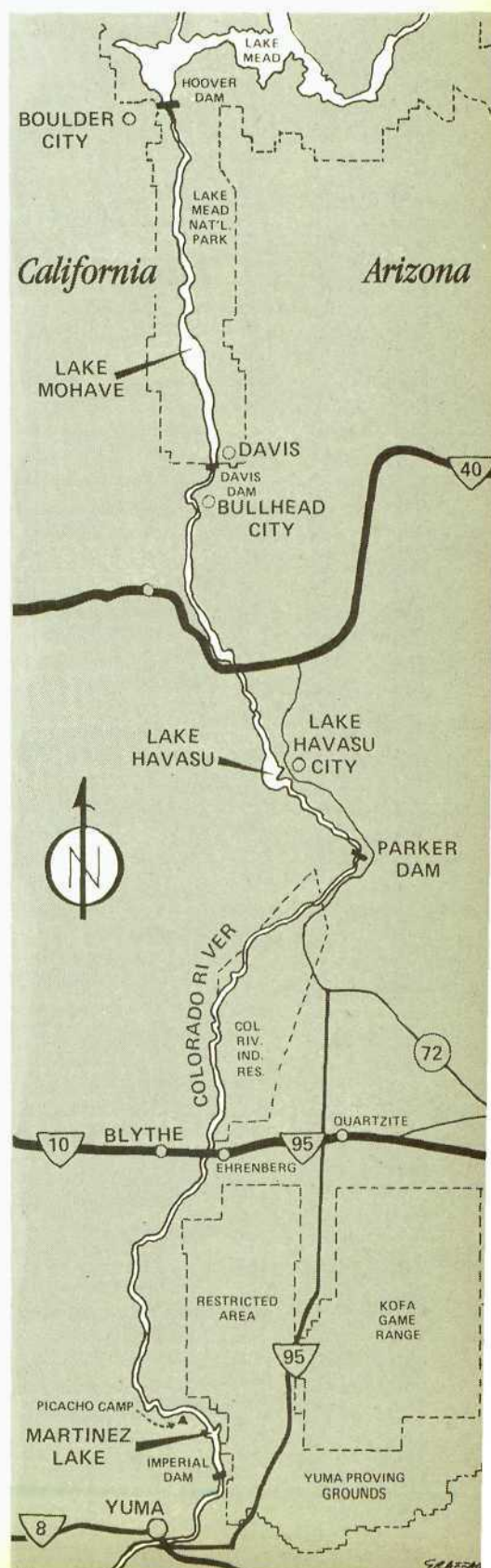
"This area," Lake Mohave, is a narrow reservoir formed by Davis Dam which reaches some 67 river miles upward to the base of Hoover Dam. It was quiet and almost deserted now, late in the day, but during the late spring afternoon a great amount of activity had taken place on the water and along the curving stretches of sandy beaches. Nothing seemed to intrude on the tranquility. Campers walked lethargically about their chores, kids were in the water close to shore, one lone skier followed a boat around the turn from Bull's Head Rock, waved, wobbled, caught himself and skimmed on upriver toward the marina.

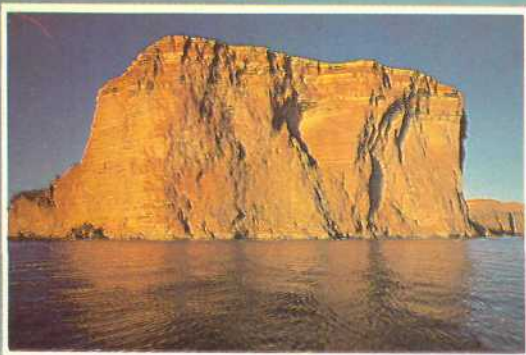
"Activities vary according to where you are, mostly. Or what you're looking for," Jim smiled a little. "As the river changes, activities change. It's good for families, though, because they can find privacy for camping, places for the kids to swim, they can do some great fishing, and there are fine trails to hike.

ALTHOUGH THE dams helped put an end to commercial river traffic, they have been instrumental in causing the dramatic influx of pleasure boats sailing the desert waterway.

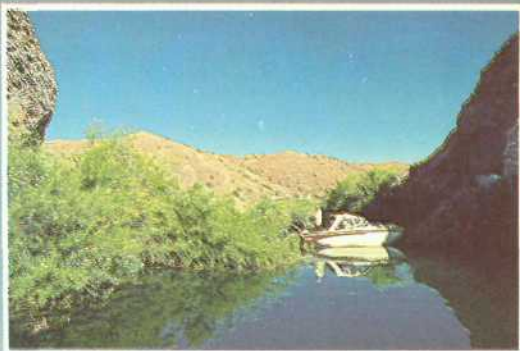
Along the Colorado are big waters like Lake Havasu, a mile-wide bulge backed up by Parker Dam, and above that, the

(cont. on page 48)

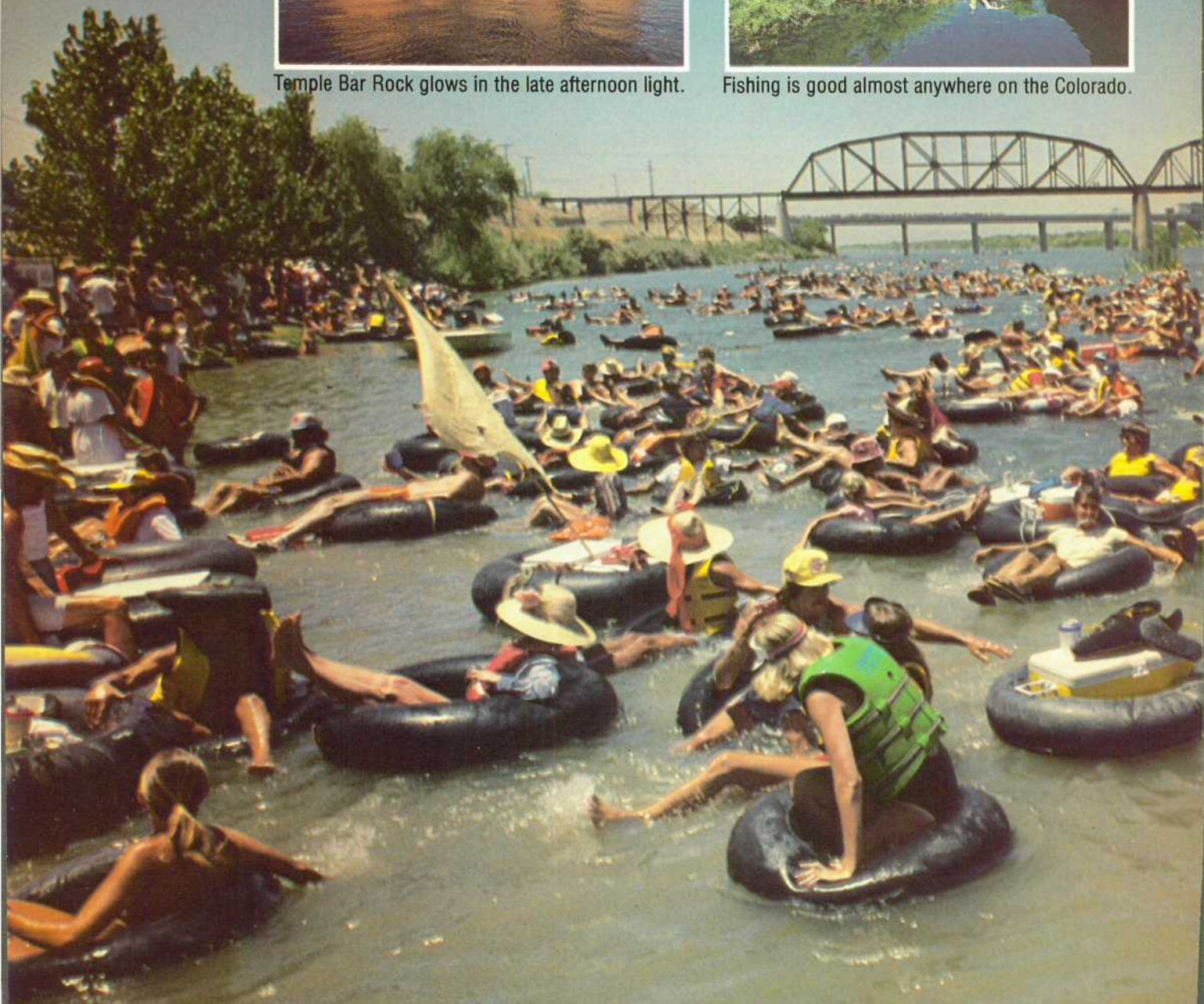




Temple Bar Rock glows in the late afternoon light.



Fishing is good almost anywhere on the Colorado.



Sunbathing is popular on land and water.



Lake Mohave hosts regattas for many sailboats.





Try relaxing in one of the many hot spring pools.



Picklefork boats are a favored make for racing.



You'll find scuba divers everywhere on the River.



The Colorado is kind to canoers, in Black Canyon.



(cont. from page 45)

67-mile-long Lake Mohave which boasts its three popular boating and fishing areas: Willow Beach, Cottonwood Cove and Katherine Landing. Below Havasu, the River provides long winding runs to the Mexican border, good for a variety of water sport.

Pleasure craft on the river range in size from the elegant Royal Cruiser houseboats that trundle their way through coves and isolated, unique inlets to the mono-sail dinghy plying its erratic course at the whim of sailor and breeze.

The world's largest inland sailing series, the Lake Havasu Regatta, which this year saw around 300 twin-hulled catamarans nipping and tacking during a two-day April sail-off, has become the backbone of boating sports on Lake Havasu. Arizona Fish and Game reports sailboats down at Senator's Wash and on Squaw Lake. Residents at Yuma have been astounded by the appearance of sailboats on the water at the very edge of that southern Arizona city.

Havasu is the hub of major sailing activities on the lower Colorado. Five annual water ski events are held there and, under the auspices of the Havasu Boat and Ski Club, ski races are run by the National Speed Boat and Water Ski Association to qualify participants for the national finals. Thanksgiving weekend sees the World Outboard World Championship run under usually clear skies on warm days. Thirty boats and 160 skiers in the district association use the big lake as primary headquarters.

Farther downriver below Parker Dam is a twelve-mile narrow stretch of water known by veterans as the Parker Strip. It is over these twisting waters that the jet-powered enthusiasts run their sleek machines. The National Jet Boat

Association and the Southern California Speed Boat Club find river conditions at Blue Water Marina ideal for racing.

The Parker Nine Hour Enduro draws entrants of every description to Ah Villa to run the fourteen mile round-trip on the first weekend of March. It is a grand melee, popular with everyone. They call it the "run-what-you-brung" event.

Those are the big ones for the boaters and skiers who compete with each other for place, speed, craft and even bumper stickers. Powerboaters say "sailors are full of wind." Sailboaters boast "sailors have more fun." Whatever the position and loyalty, there is evidence that boat owners are in full pursuit of a total sport and are finding it on the Colorado.

"In the past year, we've seen a dramatic increase in the number of canoes coming down Black Canyon to Willow Beach." Jim Mack continued to count the various activities people are finding available on the fast-developing recreation areas of the River.

Canoe enthusiasts, with permission from the Water Power Service, can launch their craft at the base of Hoover Dam and can run the eleven-mile course through the dramatic canyon. Canoes are popular, also, on the forty-mile stretch from Palo Verde above Picacho Peak to the headwaters of Imperial Reservoir. It's a two-day trip with one night for camping along the riverbank or on a broad sandbar.

"There's a good eight to ten knot current down there, and up in Black Canyon there's a series of low-water rapids that canoers find exciting."

LIFE ALONG THE Colorado River has become more sophisticated as people have moved in and the amount of open space

has diminished. New cities have sprung up or old ones have spruced up, wildlife preserves have been developed, neatly-maintained parks and campgrounds have been constructed, and mobile home sites and squatter shacks share the view with more expensive homes. Air conditioned motels, sport shops, dining rooms, marinas and fast-food emporiums efficiently care for the huge number of outdoor buffs who arrive each year.

But facilities have failed to grow in the same ratio as the influx of visitors, and campgrounds are often filled to and beyond capacity. Motels and resorts must insist upon advance reservations and Park Service authorities are sometimes hard pressed to retain the even dispositions and affable attitudes which the manual says they must. Houseboats at Lake Mohave are booked ahead for a year and a half, and prices set by various concessionaires have kept pace with short supply and spiraling cost of recreation.

Some of the best rainbow trout fishing in the world will be found in the waters around Willow Beach. Butch and Audry Webb started the Five Pound Club at Willow Beach Restaurant back in 1963 for anglers who brought in a trophy class rainbow trout or largemouth bass. Since then, they've run out of wall space for the "Wall of Fame," photographic proof of fisherman's luck.

What sort of recreation are you looking for? Somewhere along the Colorado during a twelve-month period, there's a community or an area that offers the "best time" to visit for some affair or another. It is all geared to family recreation and pleasure, whether you are a participant or a spectator. Each stretch of water is unique.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS ALONG THE COLORADO: 1980-81

(*strictly River activities)

JANUARY 4 & 11 — Havasu Off-Road Races (each 1st and 3rd Sunday, November through May)
FEBRUARY 13-15 — Parker Score-400 Off-Road Race (Parker)
FEBRUARY 13-15 — Silver Spur Rodeo (Yuma)
FEBRUARY 20-22 — Kiwanis Gun Show (Yuma)
*FEBRUARY 23-24 — Western Bass Derby (Havasu)
FEBRUARY 27-MARCH 1 — Square Dance Festival (Yuma)
FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 1 — Kiwanis Gun Show (Yuma)
*MARCH 7 — Parker 9-Hour Enduro, Ah Villa (Parker)
*MARCH 14-15 — National Jet Boat Races, Blue Water Marina (Parker)
MARCH 19-22 — Northern Yuma County Fair (Parker)
MARCH 29 — National Chili Cook-Off (Havasu)
APRIL 1-5 — Yuma County Fair (Yuma)
*APRIL 11-12 — National Jet Boat Races, Blue Water Marina (Parker)
APRIL 24-26 — Spring Golf Classic (Havasu)
*MAY 2-3 — Havasu Regatta; Hobie Cats (Havasu)
*MAY, date not yet set — London Bridge Regatta (Havasu)

*MAY 9-10 — National Jet Boat Races, Blue Water Marina (Parker)

*MAY 16-17 — Blythe River Run (Blythe)

*MAY 24 — Harvey's Fishing Hole Annual Ski Meet (Blythe)

*JUNE 21 — Innertube Race (Parker)

*JULY 4 — 15th Annual World Championship Innertube Race (Yuma)

*AUGUST 8-9 — National Jet Boat Races, Blue Water Marina (Parker)

SEPTEMBER 7 — Dove Season opens

*SEPTEMBER 12-13 — National Jet Boat Races, Blue Water Marina (Parker)

SEPTEMBER 25-27 — Indian Days Celebration (Parker)

*SEPTEMBER 26-27 — Western Largemouth Bass Tournament (Havasu)

OCTOBER 1-11 — 10th Annual London Bridge Days (Havasu)

OCTOBER 11 — Quail Hunting Season opens

*OCTOBER 10-11 — National Jet Boat Races, Blue Water Marina (Parker)

*OCTOBER 18-19 — National Speed Boat and Water Ski 50-90 Miler (Havasu)

NOVEMBER 15 — Arizona City Days (Yuma)

NOVEMBER 14-16 — 3rd Annual National Military Final Rodeo (Yuma)

NOVEMBER 22-23 — Parker Rodeo (Parker)

*NOVEMBER 28-29 — World Outboard Championship (Havasu)

*NOVEMBER 28-29 — Southern California Speed Boat Club Meet (Parker)

*DECEMBER 3 — Christmas Lighted Boat Parade (Parker) 

HOMECOMING

of time
and the desert.



Ruins of the Mutz Hotel, Elizabethtown, Moreno Valley, New Mexico.

David Muench

Evening, and a dusty rider rounds the last bend in the trail below town. His horse hesitates and then plods forward in trail-eating resignation as the ruins of the hotel catch the lonely figure's attention . . . obviously it's been years since he's been home.

As he nears, clues appear as to his travels. The campaign hat in faded grey suggests he might have been somewhere to the east in '63 or '64. Gold pan and short pick suggest California and the gold fields as they swing from well worn loops on his saddle skirts, while the high pommel tells of south Texas and perhaps dangerous expeditions into Sonora.

Clearly, it's on down the trail for tired horse and disappointed rider — little remains of this home town, except ruined 'dobe and faded signs hanging at angles against the tireless wind.

This is the desert . . . and a brief glimpse of the kind of mystery it holds for those who have made it their home in the past, or love it now.

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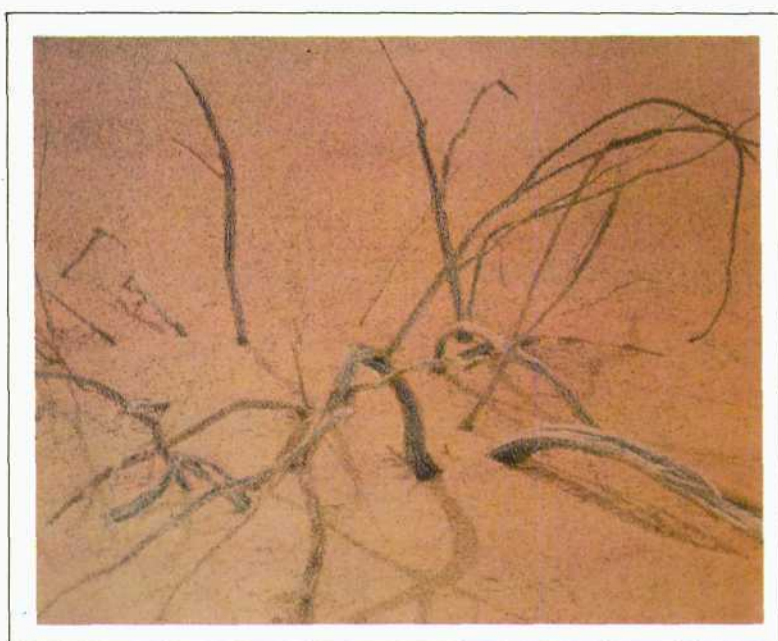
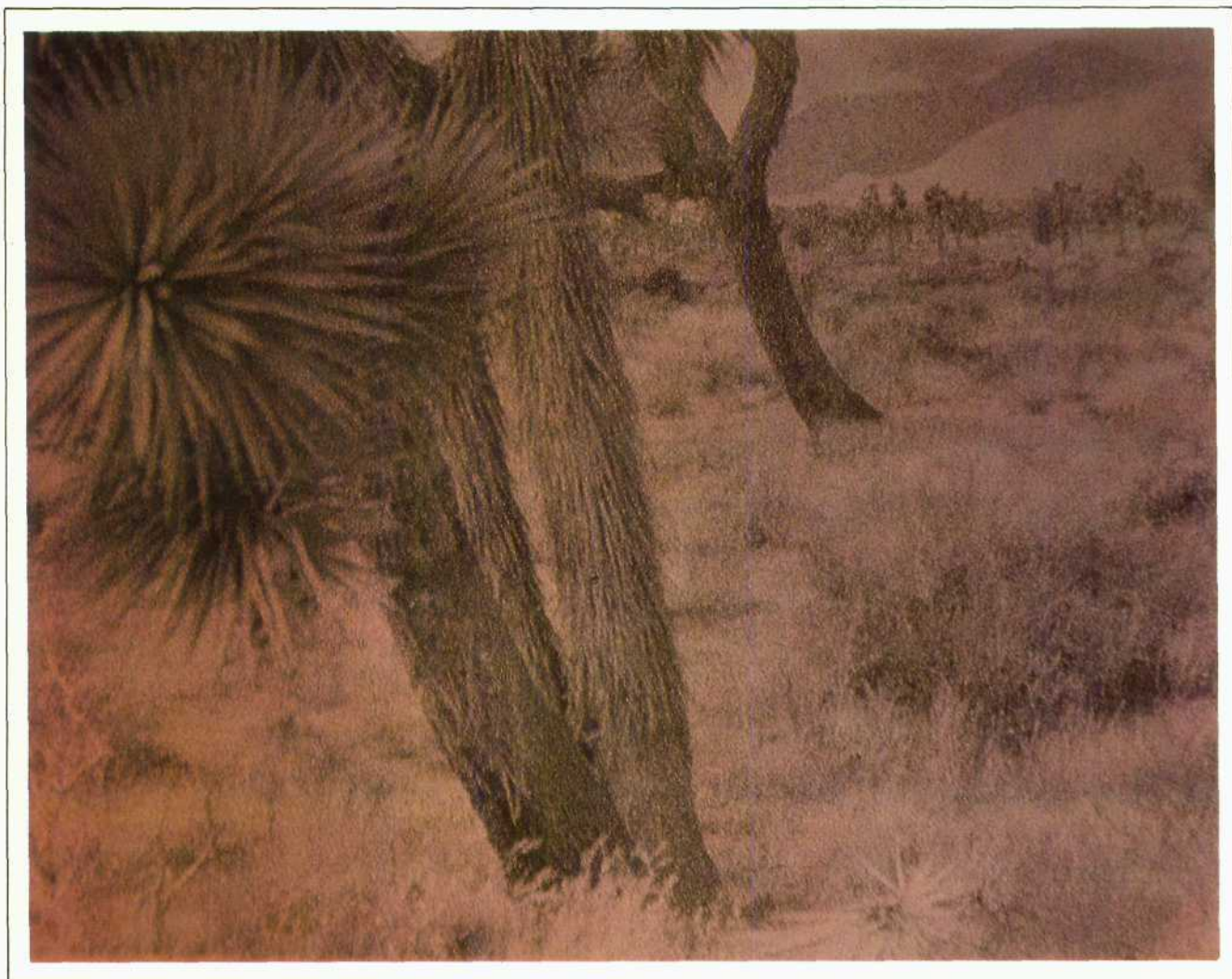
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IMPRESSIONS OF THE DESERT

by CHRISTINE PICTET

THESE IMAGES ARE PART of a portfolio resulting from two weeks of wandering in three southwestern states in the fall of 1976. Most of the photographs were made in Death Valley, Mojave Desert and Joshua Tree National Monument.

AS DAYS WERE PASSING BY, I was more and more penetrated by the feeling that life in the desert is not to conquer, but to mimic its austere environment; as if even plants were trying to mineralize themselves to better suit their surroundings, or more, be forgiven not to last in a seemingly immutable world. I had the feeling that my notion of closeness and distances was blurred by the apparent motionless of light and the impression of loss of frames of references.

IN ORDER TO TRANSLATE these impressions in my work, I used toning techniques in some cases. In others, I restricted myself to the use of the grain to convey the almost minimal aspect of some of the images. 2

SPACE AGE TENT

FAMILY TENTS designed for car campers have always been bulky and heavy. It was a breakthrough a decade and more ago when lightweight cotton canvas brought the total weight of a 9 x 12 tent down to 60 pounds. Then came nylon and other synthetic materials that were used in combination with breathable natural fibers. The result was a tent capable of sleeping four or five people, and providing stand-up room too, while weighing in at approximately 20 pounds.

Now joining the nylon and synthetic lightweights is a new material, Evolution 3, developed by Kimberly-Clark, a company perhaps best known for its paper products. Even though Evolution 3 looks similar in texture to something that could have come off a paper-towel dispenser, it is termed a spunbonded nonwoven polypropylene.

It will be used in 1981 in the Coleman Genesis model tent, an unusually shaped design that is roomy, lightweight, fire retardant and waterproof. With a floor area measuring 9 feet, 9 inches by 7 feet, 10 inches and a height of 7 feet, 6 inches in front, and 5 feet, 4 inches in the rear, the Genesis weighs 27 pounds.

A built-in awning covers an additional 60-square-feet. Entry is through a large

screened door and ventilation is provided by a front window, adjustable rear screened window and an adjustable screened vent located up near the roof in front, just under the awning.

Kimberly-Clark commissioned Bill Moss, a nationally known tent architect to design several tents specifically for the new Evolution 3 material, and Coleman has been licensed to manufacture the Moss designed tents. When he first used the material Moss found that it had dimensional stability. This means that it holds its shape under tension and there is neither sagging nor shrinking when the fabric is wet.

The Coleman Company report that the fabric is one third lighter than canvas and cooler than nylon. Water vapor escapes through the three-ply lamination fabric yet moisture in the form of rain does not penetrate. The material will not rot nor mildew and is said to dry faster than nylon or canvas, after a rain. All of these advantages outweigh the slight extra weight, according to the manufacturer.


Campers who appreciate privacy will be happy to note that Evolution 3 is more opaque than canvas or nylon. Shadows are not as revealing as they are in ordinary tents.

Poles and tent pegs also are

lightweight in an effort to make the Genesis design suitable for family campers utilizing either compact cars or small four-wheel-drive vehicles such as the Jeep CJs. Aluminum poles are in 36-inch long sections and come with an elastic shock-cord kit. The shock cord keeps pole sections together for storing or moving and permits the sections to practically "jump" together when it is time to assemble them.

In addition to The Coleman Co., Eureka Tent, Montgomery Wards and Sears, Roebuck and Co. have tested Kimberly-Clark's Evolution 3. Both Eureka and Wards plan to introduce tents made of the material for 1981.

So if you see a tent with sweeping lines, and the material looks just a little like a paper towel, have no fear. That material is stronger, lighter and more waterproof than canvas or nylon and the occupants are apt to be cooler in the summer.

Coleman's Genesis should be available this year at sporting goods stores and other outlets that sell Coleman tents. To help with your decision, why not write the Coleman Company, Inc., Dept. D, Wichita, KS 67201 for further information on the Genesis and their other fine camping equipment. 



How Much Will You Bet In Your Lifetime???

\$1,000...\$10,000...\$100,000

GAMBLING TIMES, the Player's Guide and Gambling News Magazine, has gathered some amazing facts you'll find hard to believe!

It may surprise you but chances are \$100,000 is a **small fraction** of what you will wager! In fact, if you are the typical casino patron and travel to Las Vegas or Atlantic City just twice a year, **you will bet more money than you will earn in your entire life!**

Don't believe it? Suppose we also told you that the average couple wagers **over \$1,000,000** in their lifetime! You'd say we were crazy and bet we are wrong. Well, we'd win that bet.

THE FACTS

Here are the facts: Research shows that the typical couple visiting Nevada or New Jersey drops approximately **\$300 per trip**. That's not hard to believe... it's even downright understandable. But in order to leave \$300 in the casinos, how much money do they bet? **Over \$12,000** to be exact. With the action going back and forth as fast as it does in the casino, during the average stay of 2½ days, it's easy to see how 12 grand can be wagered on various games from blackjack and craps to baccarat... not to mention the torrent of change they pour into the slots.

So, if you make two trips a year, that means you'll wager a total of \$24,000. And, if you're like most people, the thrill of gambling is with you all your life... so, multiply your two trips a year times 40 years of casino enjoyment... that equals \$960,000 worth of bets. Add to this the weekly poker games, Bingo and an occasional trip to the track and you now have wagered **over \$1,000,000**... and you're still going strong!

YOU'LL LOSE \$24,000

What we have proven is that *the average couple will bet more money than they'll earn during their lifetime*... and they'll **lose over \$24,000** doing it. Yet, in spite of this fact, they'll do virtually nothing to learn how to lose a lot less! If that couple would **improve** their game by **just 1%**, they would **save \$10,000**.

Most people are totally unaware of the tremendous amount of money they risk when they gamble. One year's worth of wagering is usually a lot more than the downpayment on a luxury yacht or new home. What couple doesn't spend vast amounts of time looking for the right house to buy? And, when they sell, how many actually lose money on the real estate deal? One would think the same couple would pay more consideration to those weekend gambling endeavors.

After all, they could turn out to be as profitable as any real estate investment.

HELP YOURSELF

That's what GAMBLING TIMES is all about... giving its readers sound common sense advice on how to **minimize** their gambling **losses** and how to make smart wagers when the odds are in your favor.

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This place was not made for

THE PASS

by PEDRO TRONCOSO LARRAZABAL

WHEN I WAS a little boy, I used to have incredible dreams about strange, arid places that, I believed, only existed in my mind. Around twenty years later, I realized that those places were a reality, that they in fact did exist.

In 1972 I had made a bus trip to the north of Chile. The bus departed at midnight and I fell to sleep right after we left Santiago and got onto the *Carretera Panamericana*. At that time I had just joined a rock band and I was supposed to meet my fellow musicians in a city named Arica, which is the last Chilean city before you enter into Peru.

I awoke the next morning with the first sun rays that crossed my window. Something was going on out there. The bus was running softly and most of the other passengers were still sleeping. Meanwhile, my head was little by little taking conscience that besides that strong sun that was born, there were visions of an unknown but in some way familiar place.

The bus had devoured distances through the night and we were in the middle of the Desert of Atacama. Suddenly, those memories of my childhood came back all at the same time. Here outside the window were the places I had dreamed of when I was a boy. A strong and strange feeling of confusion and happiness took over me, holding me still on my seat. I will not forget all the questions I asked of myself at that time, most of them without any answer, even today.

Anyway, I was on a bus and it was absolutely impossible to get off and stray alone in the middle of nothing just because I had finally found the land of my childhood dreams. I also had a commitment, a professional one that would not let me throw myself into an adventure that I hadn't expected.

There was just one thing to do about it. Plan. After two months, my work would be finished and I would be free to come back to the desert. In that time I could get all the necessary equipment and information. I forgot only one thing in my plans. This was that although sometimes we are sure about what it is we really want to do, life, or destiny may

have different ideas of its own. And what happened was exactly that.

Eight years, a failed marriage, two wonderful sons and a million of other experiences were necessary to happen before my return to the land of sun and silence.

It is summer, 1980. I am feeling great. Only one thing bothers me a little, it is one of my cameras. I hung it on my neck under my jacket. There it is very uncomfortable but the idea was that the camera had to be in an easy-to-get-to place. This is very important when you cannot open and close your baggage every time you want to make a picture.

Finally, many years later, my travel through the desert had started. I was riding a second hand XS-500 Yamaha motorcycle. Behind me was my Brazilian wife, Josefina Jordano.

We had already traveled for four days through a soft landscape between mountain and sea. Chile is a long and narrow land where the Andes and Pacific Ocean never grow longer than 200 kilometers from each other. Now, a change was operating in front of us. The vegetation has almost completely disappeared. Only some dry, tall yellow grass remained. There were no more birds or animals and the traffic on the road was simply nonexistent. Initially, my wife, who is from a tropical and green country, had a frightened feeling in front of that desert vastitude. It was necessary to stop, rest and have a long conversation before she got well again.

The Desert of Atacama is not frightening. It is immense, maybe not in terms of extent, but is immense in terms of placing you as part of the cosmos. Depending on your spirituality, you could become microscopic or bigger than you ever expect you could be.

SOMETIMES A small city appeared in front of us; other times a group of poorly constructed habitations on the seashore invited us to eat and rest. We were always accepted, and always ate calmly and slowly, awed by the almost transparent presence of a people that chose such inhospitable places to grow a family. I never asked questions.

Many years back in time, this desert was a scene of a cruel war which I don't like to talk about. But the reason of that war is still there, the only difference is that today it is worth nothing. Natural nitrate lost its importance and the English companies that exploited it left behind its residue, the pitiful sight of abandoned nitrate factories.

Many distortions of history were at last comprehensible to me. While we were there, I tried to understand in every single way the truth of this place. I found old company books almost completely destroyed but I was still able to read some names of those thousands of anonymous men that lost their health, families and even lives to make possible the English dream of economic expansion.

As we passed through the days, our initial overenthusiasm had calmed and gave place to a rather critical analysis of our experiences.

We also felt that in some way we had become a part of that desert and started acting like that. Our conversations were reduced to a minimum. All ideas and thoughts were expressed nonverbally; they took the form of a magnetic and imperceptible way of communication. I'm not talking about telepathy, I'm talking about that sense of silent but complete communication that human beings can develop under certain unusual conditions. Our conditions were unusual.

My wife, before this trip, had always lived in her beautiful country of Brasil, living what could be called a normal life of home, school, university, work. I was always traveling, but I'm a city man. The truth is that neither of us had had a previous deep contact with nature. Places, and eventually people, were passing in front of our eyes and were leaving us behind.

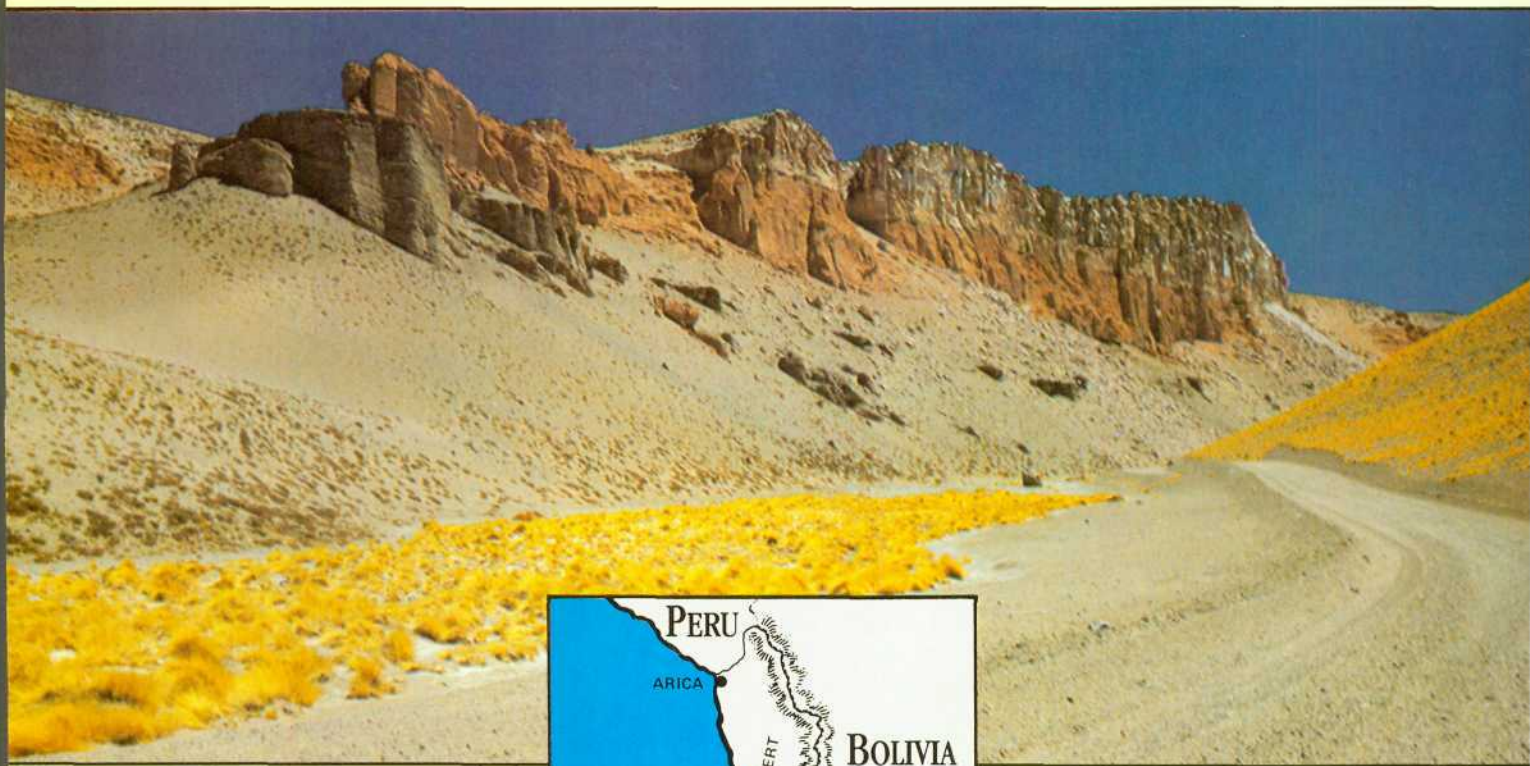
Days and nights, one after another, sometimes lying on the cold ground, we watched the deep nocturnal sky for hours; many times falling to sleep and waking up cold and trembling not much later. How many stars could the sky of the desert have? As many as his own, plus those you have created in your head.

We were getting higher slowly as we were heading for Valle de la Luna. Up to now, we had no problem with the

motorcycle riders. It is called

OF DEATH

Photographs by the Author

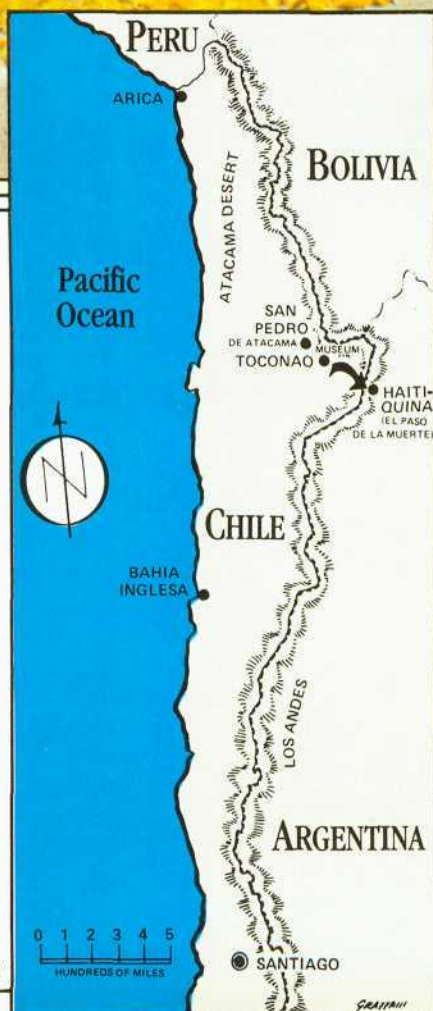


motorcycle. The travel was almost luxurious. Our initial plans were to sleep in our tent to make our budget last longer. It wasn't necessary. We always found inexpensive and good food and clean and cheap small hotels which are called *Pension* or *Residencial*. This way, we hardly got tired, and when that happened, we played for hours in the sun of a desert beach.

Now was time of our first precautions. The day was always hot, but night was chilly, and during both the air was absolutely dry. This could crack your skin badly if you didn't take a minimum of care. Ours was simply a can of Nivea cream.

At 3,000 meters of altitude in the desert, the atmosphere is so clean that the sky looks like a strange thing, so deep is its blue. Before you enter the Valle de la Luna, there is a small hill with an incredible view. It is the place where the ashes of Sidney E. Hollingworth rest, in accordance with his will.

(cont. on page 59)



The vegetation of Atacama (top) becomes sparse to the north.

Josephina Jordano (above) stands with our Yamaha XS-500 at Salar de Atacama.

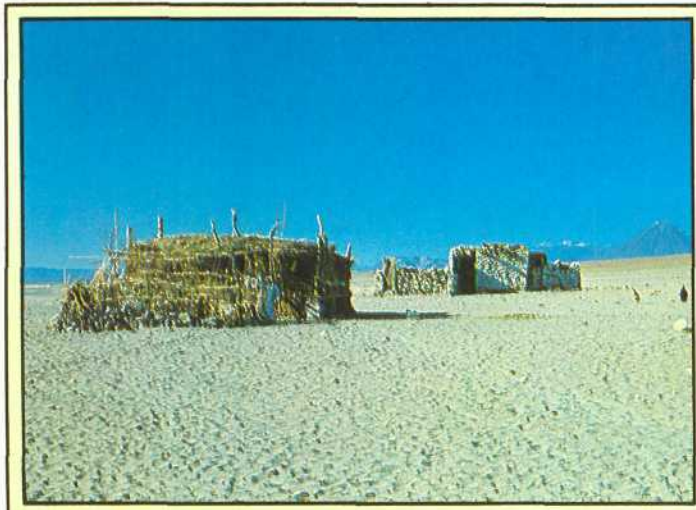


The author (above) attempted to walk toward the flamingos maybe 300 meters away but it was impossible at 4,750 meters altitude. Toconao's crafts (right) are created from a peculiar, very light volcanic rock which can be worked with hand tools.





Ancient mummy (left), about 1,700-years-old, is one of several preserved with artifacts from the same grave at San Pedro de Atacama's museum.



A war was fought over the nitrates manufactured in the factory (top photo) at Oficina Puelma, but misery in the humble homes of Toconao (above) is today unknown. The work place (right) of the Belgian Jesuit, Gustavo Le Paige.



(cont. from page 55)

He was an English geologist born in 1900. After years of study in the Chilean desert, he went back to England and expressed his will to be buried on this hill. He went back to his loved Valle de la Luna in 1966.

Under a strong sun, our motorcycle broke the quietness of the sleeping land. The meager unasphalted road took us through incredible caprices of nature.

We got off the road and due to the weight we were carrying, our speed was comparable to a man's walk. The ground was very irregular and with a white appearance. From a distance, you could believe it was snow, but it wasn't. The white deposit was salt, pure salt from the desert. Slowly, but constantly, we were running out of road.

When you are in the middle of a place like this, you lose your notion of time and there is a moment when you believe that nobody before you has ever stepped where you are standing, and if suddenly a house appears in front of you, you simply can't believe that someone can live there.

We had found an abandoned salt mine, the remains of a factory here and there, and a small house constructed with stones. We stopped and stayed there, watching. The door opened and an almost invisible dark face observed us. We were quiet and waiting. After a while, the door closed and stayed that way during all the time we remained there.

We felt the temptation to knock on that door and to ask questions, but finally we decided that if a man pays the price to live quietly and alone, you absolutely cannot disturb him. You must be respectful.

SAN PEDRO de Atacama is a small village up on the mountain. It is located beyond Valle de la Luna. First you can see a green line in the distance and as you get closer, you'll find some vegetation. Finally, you discover what an oasis is like.

San Pedro has some agriculture and crafts. Its population is mainly composed of Indians living in the 20th Century with television, pocket calculators, and Coca Cola.

They (the youth) also like the music of American rock singers to agitate their parties. While Donna Summer cried her desires through an old music box in a restaurant where we ate, I tried to think about cultural deformation (or is it degeneration?) and also, American "Top-40 penetration." All of this in the middle of the desert. We went to sleep.

The next day we went to visit the absolute star of San Pedro. It is the Museum of Archaeology and

Anthropology. This museum is the testimony of past cultures. The ancestors of today's inhabitants of San Pedro are all there, watching the time and visitors, *gringos* as well as Chileans.

We spent two days in the museum, taking pictures and trying to understand the life and customs of a people that no longer exist, at least in their original way of life.

At the museum we met the Rev. Jes. Father Gustavo Le Paige. He is a Belgian priest who came to Chile some thirty years ago and started his archaeological and anthropological investigations by himself. Soon, his scholarship was recognized by the authorities and the Universidad de Chile constructed his museum and financed his work.

Now Father Le Paige is old and tired. His health is broken. He has lost much of his natural energy. We assisted at one of his masses in the local colonial chapel. There were five persons in the chapel, including us.

Before we left San Pedro de Atacama, Gustavo Le Paige posed for me. I made one of the very few photographs that were made of him. He never liked photographs. What he liked was our motorcycle. Before his life in Chile he had lived in the Belgian Congo, where he had a motorcycle too. This was our point of communication, a conversation about bikes two minutes before we went out of San Pedro.

BETWEEN SAN Pedro and Toconao the road worsens, if you can call it a road. It took us four hours to cover a distance of 38 kilometers. Toconao is the last place with people you see on the Chilean side. When we said that we wanted to go across the Andes to continue our trip to Brazil, most of our listeners gave us a friendly smile before warning us that many people had attempted to do so before us and nobody had done it. The reason? Nobody said it, but it could be altitude, rarified air, or no gasoline — in other words, up in the mountain you find only desolation and cold.

We weren't afraid for this advice, but a real different thing was in front of us this time. After all, up to this point of our trip, we never found distances longer than 150 kilometers between inhabited places; now, well, we don't think about it.

We stayed in Toconao several days, enjoying one of the world's nicest climates. From that little green point in the middle of a salted desert, we got ourselves plenty of natural powers. We were going to need them.

The people were mainly Indians. They have incredible artifacts made from some almost weightless volcanic stone. This kind of stone is also used for house

construction. They cut it with a columbar saw to a shape that accommodates to their needs. Yet, the older constructions are much prettier. They gave the shape to the stones by using a harder stone.

The day we left Toconao, we were warned by the police that in the event of something wrong happening to us, there was little chance for us getting someone's help.

The woman from whom we rented a room during the time we stayed in Toconao handed us a plastic bag with some leaves inside. She explained that it was *coca*, the only way to go through the Chilean *altiplano*. She also related some of the failures of other motorcycle riders in their temptation to cross the mountain.


The road goes to Argentina, but the last vehicle that went across was two months ago, and it was a well-equipped Land Rover of some *gringos*. All this sounded strange to me, for the distance from Toconao to the first Argentinian village was only about 300 kilometers.

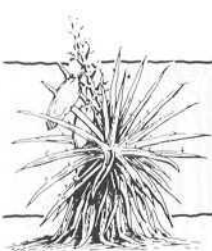
With mouths full of *coca* leaves, we said goodbye to the crowd that was expecting our departure. The function of the *coca* was to ameliorate the horrible organic effects of rarified air. We already were at 3,200 meters and going to a maximum of 4,750 meters. Besides our normal baggage, we were carrying a twenty-liter plastic can filled with gasoline, and the sixteen-liter motorcycle tank.

On the *altiplano*, in front of our eyes, we saw millions of years of earth and man. The cold and savage wind came down from the volcanos to hurt our skin and scare us. The powerful motorcycle was a weak toy in front of nature's powers. Our ride was slow and hard, and we stopped once to fill a tank almost emptied by the strength the engine had expended to get us up to that altitude.

Our walk was slow and tired, conversation was impossible. I tried to get closer to the *flamencos* which we saw in the distance, but my organism couldn't afford the waste of energy. The people that had warned us about our trip were right. This place was not made for motorcycle riders.

I will never know if any people ever lived in these altitudes, but there are legends of ancient cultures. Probably they were of a kind of man that doesn't exist anymore. Mutants, Incas, supermen? For me the answer is a mystery. Only one thing I know, it is not land for common man.

At dawn we found the first sign of human life, an Argentina's soldier. While he checked our documentation, we rested on a stone. We were tired and hungry. The soldier gave us back our papers and said: "Welcome to Argentina, you are the first motorcycle riders that ever have crossed through Huaitiquina, *El Paso de la Muerte*." 



DESERT BOOK SHOP

Gold

GOLD DIGGERS ATLAS by Robert Neil Johnson. Maps showing actual locations where gold has been found. Covers all of the western United States with detailed area maps showing interstate freeways, U.S. highways, state highways, paved and unpaved roads. Pb., 64 pgs., \$3.00

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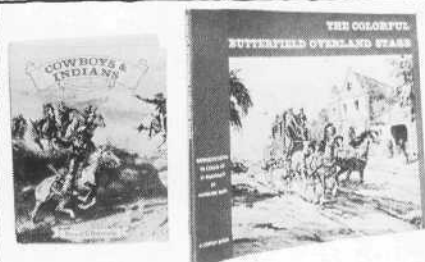
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Mining

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TOWNS OF BAJA CALIFORNIA by David Goldbaum. Goldbaum, born in Mexico in 1858, became mayor of Ensenada and an authority on northern Baja California. Originally written in 1918, this is a town-by-town history of Baja California's small towns with a foldout facsimile map updated in 1919. Pb., 69 pgs., \$2.75.



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Travel

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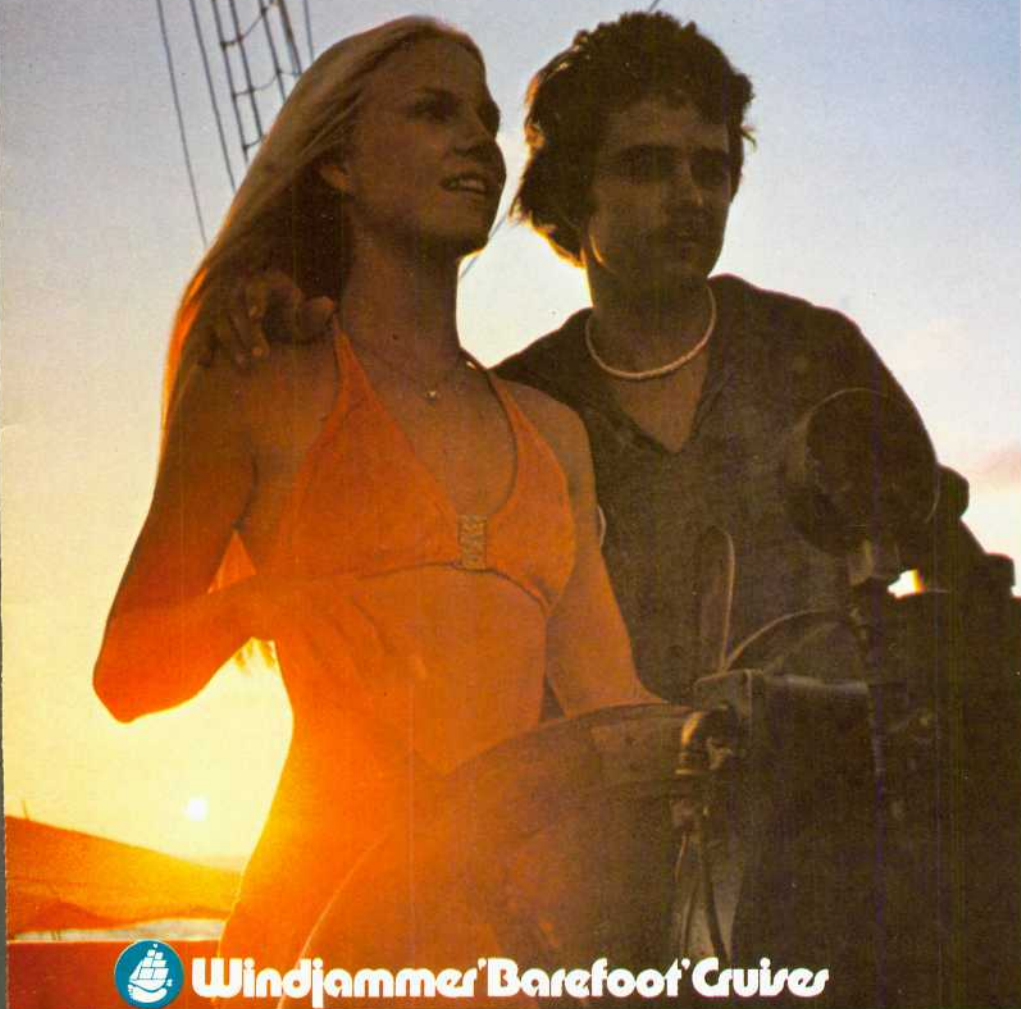
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